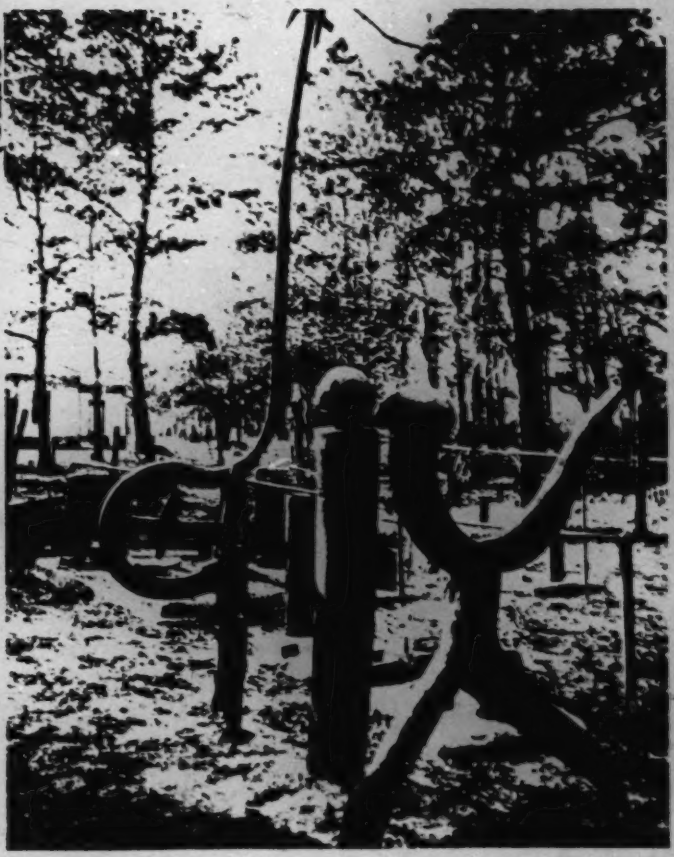
1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

322
•764
532



XII. Wooden grave markers at Sunbury

[following p. xxxii-L]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

759 759 787 to consult me an I know head uh time zackly wut kine uh herbs tuh gadduh in awduh tuh cuo im."

He had been born with this power to foretell the future, 787 he asserted.[22a] * "Outside uh dreams," he went on, "I kin use leaves an coffee grouns an a suttn kine uh seed known as duh sensitive aw jumpin seed. Yuh fine deze seeds at suttn times long duh sho uh duh Wes Indies. Yuh hab tuh keep duh seeds in a closed containuh aw dey will jis disappeah. Tuh tell fawchuns yuh spread duh seeds out fo yuh on duh groun an dey'll mooh bout. Dey moob cawdn tuh wut yuh tinkin. Tellin fawchuns is jis a mattuh uh concentratin yuh imagination on suttn tings. Den ebryting will appeah fo yuh."[22b-d]

754 Conjure is being practiced all the time, the root doctor informed us. "Frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies an duh people den fall ill an sometime die.[5, 15] Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh 789 story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis.[69c] Not long ago I see a man vanish intuh tin eah by snappin his finguhs. Hab yuh heahd uh duh man wut wuz put in prison in Springfield? He jis flied away frum duh jail an wuz nebuh caught agen.[68b, 69c] Yes, ma'am, I know wut yuh hab tuh hab in awduh tuh fly aw vanish away, but it is mighty hahd tuh git. It's duh bone ub a black cat."

(115) A woman * informant, too, had heard about flying Africans and persons who could disappear at will.[69c] She said also that she had often been ridden by witches. "Dey seem tuh come frum noweah an staht chokin yuh.[69] Witches an root men hab duh same magic powuh."

• 764 Relative to the custom of placing food and possessions on a new grave this woman spoke earnestly. "Dis wuz a common ting wen I wuz young. Dey use tuh put duh tings a (775) pusson use las on duh grabe.[47] Dis wuz suppose tuh satisfy

* *Florence Postell, 923 West 51st Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

duh spirit an keep it frum followin yuh back tuh duh house. I knowd a uhmun at Burroughs wut use tuh carry food tuh uh daughtuh grabe ebry day.[58] She would take a basket uh cooked food, cake, pies, an wine. Den she would carry dishes too an set out a regluh dinnuh fuh duh daughtuh an uhsef. She say duh daughtuh's spirit meet uh deah an dey dine tuhgedduh."

Another woman * told us that on holidays she carried food to her husband's grave and left it there for the spirit to come and get.[58] "I carry duh kine uh food we use tuh hab tuh eat on duh days he wuz off frum wuk," she said. "I take cooked chicken an cake an pie an cigahs—he like tuh smoke attuh eatin.[58a, b] I do dis cuz I know he will be lookin fuh me tuh bring it.

"Ebuh since I kin membuh I hab heahd bout spirits wanduhin roun at night,"[59] she continued. "Muh mothuh nebuh would let us go tuh bed at night widout leabin plenty uh watuh in duh pails fuh duh spirits tuh drink wile yuh sleep. Ef yuh dohn leab no watuh dey wohn leh yuh res good. I tink das wy hags ride some folks,[60] cuz dey dohn leab no watuh. I blieb witches is people dat's sole deah soul tuh duh debil. Dey hab duh powuh tuh change frum deah own shape tuh anyting dey wants tuh be,[61] so dey kin tawment udduh folks. Wen a ghos is roun I kin feel duh hot eah."

We found that belief in supernatural beings such as witches and ghosts was widespread throughout the community.

"Witches is lak folks," one woman said.** "Dey done sell demsefs tuh duh debil an he make em do anyting he wants tuh. Some git a grudge gense yuh an stahts tuh ride yuh.[62] No mattuh wut yuh do, dey kin git in yuh house. Sometime dey come lak a mouse, sometime a rabbit, an sometime eben a roach.[63] I membuh heahin bout a witch wut

* *Bessie Reese, 2407 Harden Street.*
** *Emma English, 628 West 36th Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 he speak tuh me, I tell im all bout duh root wuk an wy uh fyuhd duh gun. I ax im wouldn he uh done duh same an he say, 'Cose, but dohn do it agen.'

"I bin tuh duh poeleece tuh hep me but dey cuss me out. Once wen dat poeleece show up, duh uhmun wut tryin tuh fix me staht combin uh haiah. She kep it up till duh poeleece jis walk away. Den I went tuh a root doctuh an he tole me duh poeleece caahn do nuttn long as duh uhmun comb uh haiah. He tell me tuh use tuhpentine tuh destroy duh han wut she put down fuh me. Duh uhmun jist keep on wukin gense me an nobody couldn do nuttn tuh stop uh so I know I bettuh moob fo she git muh spirit."

534 In Brownville we found a man who knew how to make the old time drums. He made one for us out of a hollow log, across the end of which he tightly stretched a goat skin. He fastened the skin to the log by means of a number of wooden pegs. Unlike modern drums, this one was taller than it was wide, measuring about eighteen inches in length and ten inches in diameter.[25]

(115) The drum maker, James Collier,* a middle-aged, intelligent, well-educated Negro (Plate VI), said he had made a number of drums in this primitive manner. Collier told us • 764 that he had heard of drums having been used during funeral 533 ceremonies in former years. The mourners beat the drum while on the way to the cemetery; after arriving they marched around the grave in a ring and beat the drum and shouted.[24] "They call it the dead march," explained the man.

775 "The spirit don't stay in the grave," he went on. "When the funeral procession stahts tuh leave, the spirit leaves the body an follows the people frum the graveyahd. It nevuh stays with the body."[56] A little later he volunteered the additional information, "Fuh the spirit tuh rest in the grave (764) folks have tuh be buried at home. They nevuh feel right ef

* *James Collier, 806 West 39th Street.*

A, [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-F--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

775 (764) they buried frum home. The spirit jist wanduh aroun.[1]

"I have seen something I think wuz a ghost. I have no explanation of it, but I think it wuz supuhnatural. I have heard of witchcraft, cunjuh an magic. I believe some of these things happen, and the mo yuh probe intuh them the less yuh know.

789 "I have heard about a magic hoe that folks put in the gahden. They speak certain words tuh it; then the hoe goes ahead an cultivates the gahden without anyone touching it. They jist tell it tuh do the wuk and it does it." [39]

775 787 We questioned Collier again about his personal experiences with supernatural beings and he related the following story:

"Wen I wuz jist a young boy muh family use tuh live in Currytown. Me and muh brothuh use tuh go and see muh aunt who lived in Yamacraw. Tuh get frum our house tuh wheah she lived we had tuh go past a cemetery which wuz in back of the Union Station.

"One time we had been tuh see muh aunt and it got tuh be late. We stahted fuh home. It wuz beginnin of night. Muh brothuh he had rheumatism an he wuz hobblin along on a stick. We stahted along by a fence tuh get tuh West Broad Street an wen we had gone about a hundred yards we saw a lady comin tuhwards us.[59] She wuz very feah, very feah, an she wuz all dressed in black and had on a long black veil. Her dress wuz black silk and rustled as she walked.

"Muh brothuh an I, we were suhprised tuh see the lady all of a sudden, fuh we hadn't noticed her befo. She come up tuh us an she say, 'Are yuh goin roun the fence?' We tell her we wuz an she say, 'Yuh not afraid?' an we say, 'No—we not afraid.'

"The lady wanted tuh walk with us an we all staht walkin along. We had gone a short ways wen all of a sudden we look in the cemetery an we see a little white thing risin up out of the groun. It wuz kinduh hazy an shadowy an it

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

dishes, and tools, of these people, he answered, "Dey would make any ting dey needed. Dey made spoons, trays, buckets. Dey made piggins an mawtuh an pestle from a lawg uh wood. Dey would make wooden cuttuhs fuh meat an vegetubble an would dress some uh dem wid pretty figyuhs." [704]

For their meetings, he said "Golla" Tom or another would beat the drum signalling them to gather; then all would sing and dance in a circle to the accompaniment of the drum.[33] The drums of death would also sound, summoning to the "settin-up" or wake.[36] "Dey would have some hot drinks," recounted Tonie Houston, "sech as coffee an tea.[37] Den at duh time fuh buryin, duh drum would beat an all would lay flat on duh groun on dey faces befo duh body wuz placed in duh grave. Den all would rise and dance roun duh grave. Wen duh body wuz buried, duh drum would give signal wen all wuz tuh rise aw fall aw tuh dance aw sing." [18]

As to the magic of conjure, he had been well acquainted with a "cunjuh man" who, he said, was a native of Africa and could disappear at will. However, this man, Dick Hamilton, had died three years previously.

There had also been living in Tatemville "Golla" Jones Davis, an African, who, as affirmed by his relative, Solomon Davis, has not been heard of since his departure for his native land, some five or six years ago.

Richard Wright,* bent with age and rheumatism, talked at length about his childhood on the plantation, where he was one of seventy-five children owned by his "Boss." He attested to the skill exhibited in that day by the men in wood carving and the making of farm implements [704] and by the women in making cloth.

He was staunch in his belief in signs as he declared, "Deah's many tings wut's bad luck. Ef we come in duh house wid our hat on we hab tuh go back an den pull it off an den come in. Wen yuh clean duh house in duh day an

* *Richard Wright, Tatemville.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

I caahn see um but uh feels um. Sometime wen folks is comin tuh me I kin tell dey comin fo I see um, an wen yuh die yuh head tun backwud.[57] Soon's yuh die it tun roun.

"Duh folks frum Africa could see um. Dey natchul bawn dat way. An wite dogs![46] Dey alluz kin see spirit. Muh brudduh Simon he bawn wid a caul an he see um an play wid um.[4] Dey would climb trees an he climb attuh um so muh mudduh give um some tea made frum caul uh women an bline um tuh um."

We endeavored to gain some information as to the ingredients of this tea but the only explanation was that the concoction was more effective when made from cauls of women.

He could remember nothing as to the use of drums at funerals or other gatherings but his eyes twinkled when we turned the conversation to a culinary line.

"Ma would make ash cake," he recalled. "She would mix duh cawnmeal, den open duh oak ashes an spread in some hickory leaves, den put duh cawnmeal on duh leabes an cubbuh wid mo leabes, den put duh hot ashes an coals on duh top. Wen it done, she take duh bread frum duh ashes an rub it wid a rough clawt aw brush an it would be pretty an brown. Dis," he concluded smacking his lips, "wuz bery fine wid fat meat aw surup."

Justine Singleton * believed firmly in the existence of spirits as verified by her statement. "Yes, wen I wuz sick muh sistuh das dead come tuh me an I knowd dat it wuz huh an she done talk tuh me. She tole me tuh git some weepin willuh an bile it an make a wash fuh muh feet." This, she explained is an excellent remedy for foot ailments. "I done talk tuh duh spirits many times. Sometime I gib em sumpm. I caahn tell yuh no mo now cuz I caahn git muh mine tuhgedduh."

In this locality stands a small one-room structure occu-

* *Justine Singleton, Tatemville.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

uh people. Deah so much debilment in ole Uncle John Bowen dat finally he eat out hesef till he fix hesef an die."

We asked about the use of drums.

"Yes'm, dey alluz use tuh beat duh drum wen somebody die tuh let duh udduh folks know bout duh det. An at fewnuls too, dey beat it."

Relative to spirits, she replied, "No'm, I caahn see spirits cuz I ain bawn wid a caul. But now Bob Delegal he knows spirits. Down on Blackbeard Ilun, deah wuz a big hawg wut wuz a ebil spirit. Dey call um Blackbeard an dey try an try tuh kill um. So ole Bob Delegal cut up some silbuh an put it in he gun. He aim at duh hawg but he miss um an ole Bob Delegal fall down an couldn speak. Dey carry um home an he nebuh did talk no mo an duh nex day he die."

According to Sophie the old people on St. Catherines would pray at the rising and at the setting of the sun and at the conclusion of their prayers they would say the words "Meena, Mina, Mo." Asked if she knew the meaning of these words, she shook her head negatively.

"Yuh know, Susie Branch, who lib jis cross duh road deah, could tell yuh some uh deze tings too. We wuz chillun tuhgedduh down on St. Catherines Ilún. I gwine call uh."

In a moment Susie* arrived. Tall and thin, she was dressed in a red, green, and blue cotton plaid skirt and a man's shirt with the tail hanging loosely outside. She was very talkative and was enthusiastic in verifying many of the things that Sophie had mentioned.

Susie listened gravely as we inquired about her recollections of the old people in her family. She told us the following story: "Dey steal muh great-great-gran, uh name wuz Sukey, frum off duh beach in Africa wen she wuz a young miss. I dunno wut paht ub Africa she come frum. She alluz say she come frum Africa, duh country weah dey dohn weah no cloze. At duh plantation at St. Catherines she wuz

* *Susie Branch, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

duh seamstress fuh duh slabes. She make mos all dey weah."

When we asked her if she ever heard that dreaming about a snake "meant anything," the old woman replied, "Yes, ma'am, dat mean yuh got a enemy.[51] Not many nights ago I dream bout a snake an uh sho wuz sked wen uh wake up."

They both laughed and Susie leaned over and tapped Sophie on the arm and said, "Oh yes, deah's lots uh dem tings bout babies. Wen dey bawn wid a caul, das sho a sign dey will be bery wise an kin talk wid duh spirits.[4] Ain dasso, Sophie?"

Agreeing, Sophie hastened to add what she had heard about babies born with teeth. "Dey will hab bad luck all deah libes.[66] Dat sho wuk out. Deah wuz one boy bawn dat way wut lib right yuh in Wite Bluff an he wine up by bein in duh chain-gang an dat sho nuff bad luck."

"But dis lill plant heah called 'Cherokee' is spose tuh bring good luck ef yuh plants it by duh front doe step,"[34a] said Susie.

In this community as in many others strangers are not allowed to be buried in the local cemetery but in what is known as the "strangers lot," a piece of ground set apart from the cemetery proper. The custom of bringing the dead back to their original home for interment is also prevalent throughout coastal Georgia. The body of a young man who recently died in New York was brought back to White Bluff for burial. Relative to this custom, Susie spoke quietly. "Dey alluz brings um back tuh bury um ef dey kin git duh money, cuz yuh see duh spirit'll jis wanduh roun an nebuh be satisfied lessn it brung back home tuh be buried."[1]

"I know Lunnon Grayson know all bout dem tings too. Yuh tun off tuh duh lef at duh fus road leadin off frum duh highway yuh. Ax anybody dem, an dey'll tell yuh wich is his house. He use tuh lib on St. Catherines too, but he come up yuh long fo me an Susie," Sophie said.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

- Dey got Bo-Cat in jail
Bout tuh hang im by duh rail
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

One of the Pin Point women, Margaret Snead,* recalls vividly the events of the De Lancy crime.

"Wy, duh night fo Catherine De Lanzy wuz kill, she spen it in town wid me," said Margaret Snead. "Attuh dat night I didn see uh no mo. People frum duh Pint come inquirin bout uh but nobody seem tuh know nuttn bout uh weahbouts. Bout two weeks latuh, a pahty uh wite mens out huntin come cross duh body at Raccoon Keys. Dis a ilun way beyon Hell's Gate. Mus be mohn twenny miles frum duh Pint. I dohn see as how nobody could carry a pusson dat fah jis tuh murduh em. Anyways, duh body wuz brung tuh duh city, an at duh unduhtakuh's office people went in tuh see ef dey could dentify it. Dis a hahd ting tuh do. She bin in duh watuh fuh days an days fo a high tide wash duh cawpse on sho. Duh body wuz caught tween two logs weah duh buzzuds went tuh wuk on it.

"I membuh a great big cawn wich she use tuh suffuh wid but couldn nebuh git rid ub. So I went in an had a look at duh foot, an sho nuff deah wuz dat cawn jis lak it use tuh be wen she wuz libe.

"Her ole huzbun, Limbrick De Lanzy, already wuz rested, an he git sen up fuh life. It wuz Friday, May duh thuteent, dat ole Limbrick carried Catherine off down duh ribbuh an murduh uh. A double bad luck, Friday an duh thuteent,[21] das wy dey make up duh song."

"Was the body buried at Pin Point?" we were interested to know.

"Yes, it wuz, but we didn hab no settin-up cuz duh body wuz too fah gone. Dat wuz sad. Ebrybody lub Catherine an fuh uh tuh die an be buried widout a settin-up aw lettin

* *Margaret Snead, Pin Point.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

anybody view uh face aw lay deah hans on uh[31] wuz sho a pity.[36]

"Ebrybody wuz at duh fewnul. Come frum miles roun tuh pay deah las respecks tuh a po wife murduhed by uh huzbun on Friday duh thuteent.

"Duh body wuz brung frum duh unduhtakuh's pahluh straight tuh Sweet Fiel ub Eden Chuch at duh Pint. Chuch so crowded yuh caahn hahdly see duh coffin up in front. We sing hymns, an den wen duh singin hab die out an yuh could heah jis a lill hummin heah an deah, somebody stan up an say, 'Catherine De Lanzy wuz a sistuh ub duh Lawd.' 'She sho wuz,' somebody else say. 'She wuz a chile ub Jesus an she walk in duh way ub righteousness.'

"Dis staht off duh whole congregation an deah mustuh bin neah a hundud people git up an gib testimony bout Catherine's goodness. Some people cry an scream wen dey tell duh congregation wut a fine uhmun she bin.

"Den duh remains wuz took tuh duh cimiterry neah duh chuch an buried. Duh whole time we sing hymns an sway tuh duh soun uh duh music. Ebrybody tro a hanful uh dut in duh grabe an[38] wen duh grabe digguhs fix duh moun, we put some uh Catherine's tings on duh top. Deah wuz a lill flowuh vase wid duh bottom knock out, an a lamp chimney, an some puhfumery bottles, an duh pitchuh she made ice watuh in jis fo Bo-Cat tuk uh off.[47] Den duh ministuh nounce dat duh fewnul suhmon wuz tuh be preach at duh annyul memorial wen dey pray fuh ebrybody who die durin duh yeah.[42] An den das all an we wehn home."

"Why was Limerick De Lancy called Bo-Cat?" we asked.

"Deah ain no signifcunse tuh dat. I hab a frien dat ebrybody call Friday but[30] uh name is Lula. I hab a cousin name Augus Bond an a son name May Bud simply cuz he wuz bawn in May. One uh muh brothuhs wuz call Baby Head cuz at birth he wuz a tiny baby wid sech a great big head.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

• 764 [777] [775] "No, I dohn pay much mine tuh names," said Margaret Snead. "But I do pay tention tuh bad luck dates. Look uh po Catherine De Lanzy, depribe ub all duh propuh tings dat come fo burial, cuz it wuz a double bad luck date. Folks at duh Pint do say dat uh spirit nebuh will res in duh grabe." [36]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SANDFLY

791 In a section of Sandfly known as Baker's Crossing lives Ophelia Baker, better known as Madam Truth, professed fortune teller and clairvoyant. The woman's sober attire and her modern attractive house give little evidence of her profession. When holding a seance, however, her whole appearance undergoes a change; her body becomes tense and jerks spasmodically; her dark eyes roll wildly. Of her ability in her chosen field the medium says, "I advise on business an love affeahs. I tell good an bad nooz comin tuh yuh. Deah's a remedy fuh ebry trouble an I hab dat remedy, fuh a spirit hab brung it tuh me."[22a,e]

791 794 783 [533] Madam Truth, a member of the Holy Sanctified Church of Sandfly, said that all members must undergo a sanctifying process in order to be saved. After this has been accomplished members claim to be able to hear, from a great distance, singing, talking, and the sounding of drums. We were told that the beating of the drums has a special significance, but that was all we could learn on the subject; we were told that this was a secret, divulged only to members.

794 262 Members of the church are forbidden to eat certain kinds of fish and also cabbage, lettuce, and other green vegetables. The reason they give is that they have received a warning from the spirits that it is unwise to eat these foods.[65]

791 533 202 The plump, dark-skinned fortune teller said that she had spent her childhood on Skidaway Island. She remembered hearing the drums beaten to tell the people in the nearby settlements of an approaching dance or festival. Her father had been one of those who beat the drum and thumped out a regular message on it, a message that could be heard for miles and was clearly understood by all those who had heard it.[26]

• 764 [782] The woman also remembered wakes which had been held on Skidaway. Coffee and sandwiches were served the[87b,e] mourners, each one of whom poured some of the coffee on the ground for the spirit of the deceased.[88b,e]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829 Did Uncle Robert remember any particular words that the African people had used?

"Ole man Pompey he say, 'skinskon' ebrytime he git mad. Wen he wuz bery mad he alluz say dat. But nobody know wut he mean. He call a watuhmelon a 'balonga.'

"I membuh duh African mens use tuh all duh time make lill clay images. Sometime dey lak mens an sometime lak animal. Once dey make a big un. Dey put a speah in he han an walk roun im an say he wuz duh chief. But dat clay got too much ribbuh mud in um an he ain las long. Sometime dey try tuh make duh image out uh wood, but seem lak duh tool ain right, so mos times dey's ub clay." [41g. 70c.]

We questioned the old man about any other recollections he might have concerning African people and he added, "Doze Africans alluz call one anudduh 'countryman.' Dey know ef dey come frum duh same tribe by duh mahk dey hab.[14] Some hab a long mahk an some hab a roun un. Udduhs weah eahring in duh eah. Some weahs it in duh lef eah an doze frum anudduh tribe weahs it in duh right eah.

829 •764 "Deah's two Africans buried on duh ilun right now. Lonnie Green an his brudduh, dey buried right neah duh Indian mouns. Jack Pinckney yuh, he bury um."

At this point Uncle Jack and Uncle Robert engaged in an animated discussion of the types of funerals which had been held in those early days.

[202] Uncle Jack said, "Wen a pusson die, we beat duh drum tuh let ebrybody know bout duh det.[26] Den dey come tuh duh wake an sit up wid duh body."

Uncle Robert added, "Wen one uh doze Africans die, it wuz bery sad. Wen a man's countryman die, he sit right wid um all night. Den in duh mawnin he go out an pray tuh duh sun. Yuh know, missus, doze Africans ain got no Christianity. Dey ain hab no regluh religion. Dey jis pray tuh duh sun an moon an sometime tuh a big stah. Attuh dey

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829
764 pray, dey come in an put deah han on duh frien an say good-bye.[30, 31] Den dey go home."

764 "We beat duh drum agen at duh fewnul."[34] This from
533 Uncle Jack. "We call it duh dead mahch. Jis a long slow beat. Boom-boom-boom. Beat duh drum. Den stop. Den beat it agen."

534 We wanted to know what the drums looked like and the two men took turns in supplying the information.

Uncle Robert spoke first. "Duh ole drums wut duh Africans make wuz make out ub a skin uh some kine uh animal stretch obuh a holluh lawg. Dey didn eben take duh haiah off duh skin. Jis put it on datta way."[35]

Here Uncle Jack spoke up, "Ain so long sence dey stop makin drums. Wen I wuz a young man, we use tuh make um. Dey wuz fo-cawnuhed sometimes an wuz cubbuh wid a skin. Dey wuz bout fo feet high. At duh fewnul wen we beat duh drum we mahch roun duh grabe in a ring."

538 We asked if any of them knew any spider stories. There was some hesitancy; then they all said, "No'm."

[115] Celia Small,* a slim, middle-aged Negro woman, listened intently, nodding her head. We asked Celia if she had heard of them.

"Yes'm, muh granma she speak ub em many time an say dey's wicked." Celia laughed slyly. "She say dey talk bout um mung duh mens."

We asked if the spider had a name, like Brer Rabbit.

"No'm, he ain got no name. Lease, I ain nebuh heahd it. Only time I knows yuh call a spiduh wen yuh say, 'An Nancy got um,' an das wen he ketch duh fly.[53] Duh spiduh is wicked. Hab tuh be bery keahful bout um. He drop right down out uh duh sky on yuh."

"What about the spider stories?" we persisted.

Celia looked at us warningly. She laughed softly.

* *Celia Small, Wilmington Island.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SUNBURY

Savannah an he is dressed in a long robe. He walk long an duh folks all mahch behine im. Dey goes down tuh duh ribbuh an sing as dey go. Dey alluz hab duh baptizin wen duh tide is goin out so duh watuh will wash duh sins away. Attuh dey all gits tuh duh ribbuh, dey stop an duh preachuh ast duh candidates tuh step fawwud. One by one he dip em in duh watuh an dey is buried in baptism. Wen dey is all baptize, duh preachuh pray tuh duh ribbuh an [63] ast dat all sins be taken away. Den all duh folks sing an shout an praise duh Lawd."

The little group leaning on the railing nodded in agreement and as if in memory of the ceremony their bodies swayed rhythmically. As we listened and watched we could almost see the white robed procession winding to the river bank; we could almost hear the chanting of the converts as their sins were washed away.

The conversation turned to burial customs in the section and the women told us that "settin-ups" were still held for those who died.

"We all sit wid duh body an sing an pray an keep duh spirit company," said one of them.

Another added, "At duh fewnul we sing an we puts our hands on duh cawpse tuh say goodbye. It bad luck not tuh do dis." [31]

We had heard in other communities that in case of death away from home the body is brought back to its native town for burial. This custom is also prevalent in Sunbury, we learned.

"Ebrybody wannuh be buried in deah own town," [1] Elizabeth said. "An we nebuh bury strainjuhs wid our own folks. Ef a strainjuh die yuh, we bury em in duh strainjuh's lot." [3]

Emma Stevens,* tall and slim, a baby in her arms and several small children gathered about her, spoke up, "Yuh got

* *Emma Stevens, Sunbury.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 Uncle Jonah told us that he was eighty-seven years of age and that he had been born on a plantation on Harris Neck. He had remained there until after the time "uh duh big raid," he said and he had been in Sunbury for a period of about sixty years.

829 When asked if he could remember any of the slaves who had come from Africa, a faraway expression came into his eyes. Finally he offered, "Yes'm, I membuh two. Ole man Ben an Sally dey bote come frum Africa. Dey sho use tuh use some funny wuds. Wen it would tunduh, dey would alluz say it wuz 'maulin a bumba.'"

829 538 Uncle Jonah tried to recall some of the African stories he had heard in his youth. He knit his brows in deep thought. After a time he said, "I membuh heahin bout a boatload uh Nigguhs wut wuz bring frum Africa. Dey wuz kep hid in duh cabin till dey git tuh Sunbury. Wen dey let um out an dey see dey wuzn in Africa, dey jis take wing an fly back home. Cose now, ma'am, I didn see dis but I heah bout it many times."

[789]

Another story that the old man told us was as follows: "Deah wuz two countrymen wut bote come frum Africa libin on duh plantation. One ub dem die an dey bury um widout duh udduh knowin bout it. Pretty soon he lun bout how he frien die an he make um dig um up. He say he wannuh say a few wuds tuh um. Dey dig up duh man an he speak tuh um an den put um back in duh grabe. It wuz all right attuh he say goodbye."[30]

754 "Uncle Jonah," we asked, "do you remember much conjuring in those days?"

The white head nodded slowly. "Yes'm, deah sho wuz cunjuhin, but deah's mo cunjuhin[15] in deze days dan deah wuz in doze. I heah bout it all duh time roun yuh."

115 322 764 Our interview concluded, we set out in search of Siras Bowen, who, we had been told, carved wooden tombstones.[70a, b] We rode down the sandy, tree-lined road until we came to the

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SUNBURY

115 Sunbury Baptist Church, a white frame building set back
322 from the highway against a background of verdant spread-
• 764 ing trees. The Bowen family burial ground was to the right of the church and here we discovered that Siras' skill in wood carving was manifested in many unusual markers.

764 These were wooden images (Plate XII)[A] set on graves
322 that were close together. One resembled a large bird; an-
532 other represented a snake writhing upon a stand; and the third was the figure of a man, round and pole-like of body, with a head that resembled a ball and rudely sculptured features.[41a] Another Bowen marker was of clay painted yellow; in its surface was roughly cut the outline of an open hand with a small mirror glittering in the palm.

764 Most of the graves were decorated with possessions of the departed persons.[47] There were many glasses, bottles, and vases, most of which had been turned a shimmering purple from long exposure to the sun. For a time we wandered through the little cemetery, reading the inscriptions on the various tombstones.

115 The same day we visited another cabin on the dirt road
(342) leading back from Sunbury Bluff. We had already driven past the little two-room shack, painted green, its dark roof patched in many places, when our attention was attracted by a stout, middle-aged woman who was sitting on the porch idly playing with a long, dangerous looking knife. At once we reversed the gears and rolled backward to a stop. Near the woman was seated the husky figure of a young girl. She
(291) wore but one garment, a faded green dress which hung raggedly to about the knee. Beneath the skirt were large muscular legs that were twisted about the rungs of the chair. Long, staring yellow eyes looked out at us with disturbing,
(302) unblinking fixity. The girl's hair stood out stiffly in a number of tight little braids. She was slowly, laboriously stringing weights on a fish net.

The older woman spoke at first in a grudging, reserved

A. [See Categories 322 & 764, plate following p. xxxii-L--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

manner. The girl continued her work on the fish net, occasionally glancing at us with that impenetrable expression.

After much persuasion we gained the older woman's confidence and she spoke to us freely. She, too, attended the baptisms held by members of the two churches and also remembered various "settin-ups" she had gone to. She told us that food was usually prepared for the watchers.

"Bread an coffee," she said, "das wut dey gie yuh at a settin-up."

"We thought they ate chicken," we remarked.

"No, dey dohn hab no chicken. Jis bread an coffee."

The subject of food led us to inquire if she knew of any persons who refused to eat certain things.

"Muh huzbun wohn nebuh eat chicken. Ain nebuh eat it sence he wuz bawn, an needuh his mudduh befo him."[65]

"Why is that? Doesn't he like it?"

"Ain no mine wedduh he lak it aw ain lak it. He jis wohn eat it. Lots uh folks say deah's some food wut dey dohn eat. I nebuh eat rabbit. An none uh muh folks wouldn eat it needuh. Dey say it wuz no good tuh eat."

The conversation drifted on until the talk of food brought to the woman's mind gala occasions at which she had feasted and danced in her youth.

"We use tuh dance all duh time tuh duh drums," she said. "We would dance roun an roun in a succle an clap our hans an sing. Dey would hab duh dances obuh on St. Catherine Ilun."

"How would you know when they were going to hold a dance?"

"Dey beat duh drums on St. Catherine.[66] Den dey heah it at Harris Neck an folks deah tell all ub us yuh bout duh dance. We all go obuh tuh St. Catherine in a boat an dance an dance till mos daylight."

When the talk finally turned to roots and other potent

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

of large round baskets, about twenty inches in diameter, with matching covers that fitted well down over the rim. Isaac used bulrushes and grasses for his material and worked with a sure deft touch that insured sturdy construction.

He remembered that drums had been used for a variety of purposes during his youth. He said, "I use tuh dance tuh duh drum.[23] I recall wen dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people on Harris Neck tuhgedduh fuh a dance aw fewnul.[24] Cose, dey hab a diffunt beat wen dey call um tuh a settin-up aw fewnul frum duh one dey use tuh call um tuh a dance. Deah wuz two kine uh drum. One dey call duh kittle drum, an one wuz duh bass drum. It stan bout two an a half foot high. Dey use tuh alluz hab a settin-up wen somebody die. Wen folks would go tuh duh settin-up, dey would gib um bread an coffee.[37b, c]

"Dey still hole ribbuh baptisms yuh. Dey git tuh duh ribbuh an attuh dey pray an sing up on duh bank, duh preachuh take duh candidates down in duh ribbuh. Fo he baptize each ub um, he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh an ax fuh all duh sins tuh be wash away."[63]

Remembering what we had been told about the haunted road to Maringo, we questioned Isaac and he said, "Yes'm, I hab heah bout duh hanted road tuh Maringo on duh Young Man Road. Lots uh folks say deah is spirits roun deah.[59] Wen yuh try tuh pass duh fawk in duh road, duh spirits stop yuh sometime an wohn let yuh by. Some uh duh spirits mus be good, fuh Ise heahd one story bout a man who wuz passin by an all ub a sudden his hawse jis stop shawt in his tracks. Jis wouldn go anudduh step. Duh man try an try, but he couldn make duh hawse moob. Den he see a spirit come long an it take hole ub duh hawse bridle an lead him long. Duh hawse go right long. Den duh spirit disappeah. I hab heahd lots uh stories bout dat road but uh nebuh see nuttn muhsef."

Our next interview was an unusually delightful one. Sit-

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahs it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an[12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[6] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[12a]

754 "Yuh heah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies."[15]

795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb
[783] tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
[782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[63] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.' "

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
• 764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 early days, but her memory was rather clouded. She answered pleasantly, however, and when she was not talking to us mumbled softly to herself.

775 "I do know dat folks bawn wid a caul kin see spirits," [4]
787 she admitted. "Plenty uh folks roun yuh say duh spirits
845 peah tuh um." [59]

764 When we inquired about drums being beaten at funerals,
533 she shook her head stubbornly and refused to say anything on the subject.

The daughter, overhearing the conversation, paused in her task of ironing, and said, "Yes'm. Dasso. They beats the drum tuhday at the fewnul.[24] Specially ef yuh blongs tuh a awganization, they goes right along in the fewnul pruhcession an beats the drum as they mahch. I remembuh
[202] heahin bout in the ole days they beat out messages on the drum.[26] Let the folks know wen sumpm wuz bout tuh happen. Wen they give a dance ovuh on St. Catherine, they beat the drum tuh let the folks heah know bout it."

764 At a funeral, the bottles and dishes and other possessions belonging to the departed person were left on the grave, the women informed us. "The spirit need these," [47] the younger
[775] woman explained, "jis lak wen they's live. Evrybody mahch roun the grave in a succle an shout an pray."

262 We inquired if some people in the section were afraid to eat certain foods. Once more Josephine shook her head in negation.

The obliging daughter who listened intently to everything that was said again interceded. "I do heah bout that. Theah is some folks wut caahn eat suttn foods. They say it's bad luck an they nevuh do eat it. Right now theah's lots of foods wut some folks dohn eat." [65]

527 At this point in the conversation the older woman brightened and told us about the harvest festivals held during plantation days.

"We hab big feas. Ebrybody bring some ub duh fus

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 cunjuh wut is laid down fuh yuh an let yuh know wen somebody is aftuh yuh." [13a]

829 The midwife told us that she had recently returned to Harris Neck, after having lived for many years in Waycross. We asked her which community she preferred and she said, "I lak it in Waycross, missus. Duh two places jis ain nuttn lak. Tings is sho diffunt yuh. Duh folks jis dohn ack duh same. Yuh wouldn even know dey wuz human. Soon as I kin Ise goin back tuh Waycross. I jis dohn lak it heah."

533 202 The conversation turned to drums and in regard to this subject Rosa spoke up emphatically. "Yes'm, I membuh bout how some time back dey use tuh beat out messages on duh drum.[26] Dat wuz tuh let us know wen deah wuz tuh be a dance aw a frolic. Wen dey hab a dance obuh on St. Catherines, dey beat duh drum tuh tell us bout it. Duh soun would carry obuh duh watuh an we would heah it plain as anyting. Den duh folks heah beat duh drum tuh let em know bout it in udduh settlements."

533 764 The women also spoke of drums in connection with death customs. They told us that they were still beaten by those in the procession accompanying the body to the grave.[34]

764 "Ebrybody put duh hans on duh body tuh say goodbye," [31] Rosa told us.

"Yuh speak tuh duh pusson, too, an tell um a las message," said Anna.

"Yuh put dishes an bottles an all duh pretty pieces wut dey lak on duh grabe.[47] Yuh alluz break deze tings fo yuh put um down." [47a]

We wanted to know the reason for doing this, for we had been informed on other occasions that it was done so that no one would be tempted to steal.

Rosa, however, stated an entirely different motive.

[761] "Yuh break duh dishes so dat duh chain will be broke. Yuh see, duh one pusson is dead an ef yuh dohn break duh

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

tings, den duh udduhs in duh fambly will die too. Dey will folluh right long. Folks alluz hab two fewnuls. We hab one wen dey die an den once a yeah we hab a suhvice fuh ebrybody wut died durin duh yeah.[42] Duh preachuh say a prayuh fuhrum all."

From this source we obtained added verification of the fact that river baptisms were still held.

"We alluz baptize on duh ebb tide," said Rosa. "Duh watuh washes duh sin away. Duh preachuh pray up on duh bank an den wen he baptize duh candidate, he pray tuh duh ribbuh tuh take away duh sins."[43]

Later in the conversation the women recalled harvest festivals[44] that had been held many years before. "Dat wuz alluz a big time." Anna's rather somber face lit up at the remembrance of the festive occasion. "Ebrybody bring some ub duh fus crop tuh duh chuch an we prepeahs a big feas. We pray an gib tanks fuh duh crop an pray fuh duh nex yeah. We all eat an sing an dance. One uh duh dances call duh Buzzud Lope.[17] We still dance dat tuhday."

Rosa told us proudly that she was a granddaughter of Katherine Basden who had been recognized as a leader among the Negroes in the section.

"Me an muh brudduh wuz muh granmudduh's favorites," she said. "She alluz said she lak us bettuhn all duh udduh chillun. Wen I wuz only bout twelve yeahs ole, she tell me wen I grow up I would take huh place an carry on duh wuk she wuz doin."

Moving her powerful shoulders in rhythm and clapping her hands together, the woman sang us a song that her grandmother had crooned to new-born babies as she held them in her arms. The words were, for the most part, indistinguishable. Over and over we caught one repeated phrase, "nikki yimi, nikki yimi."

"Muh granmudduh wuz took very sick. She knew she wuz gonuh die. Dat wuz jis wen muh oldes chile wuz bawn.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 she declared. "I buns it so nobody kin wuk hahm wid it." [10]

[777] Young Reuben spoke up. "Ef yuh weahs a silvuh coin, it
[789] brings yuh good luck," he stated doggedly. "An ef any body cunjuh yuh aw wuk gense yuh, duh money tun black an yuh know yuh hab tuh do sumpm bout it fo duh cunjuh wuks." [12a, c, d]

"Did you ever see anyone who was conjured?" we asked. All three nodded solemnly.

Uncle Ben spoke first. "Dey's mosly all crippled up an caahn moob bout. Ef dey dohn do nuttn, duh cunjuh gits wus an dey dies." [15]

[753] "Folks wut is cunjuhed hab snakes in em an sometimes
[825] frawgs.[5] Yuh kin see em moobin roun in deah bodies," vol-
[759] unteered Reuben. "Wen dey visit duh root doctuh [46] an he wuks obuh em, den dey's jis as good as noo."

"Some folks roun bout say dey sees spirits," added Uncle
775 Ben. "Dey calls em plat-eye, cuz dey hab jis one big eye
776 hangin out in front.[62] I dohn fool roun wid sech tings fuh dey's sho bad luck."

775 "In some places the people told us that dead people's spirits returned to earth. Is that true here?" we asked.

Aunt Sarah speculated. She wagged her black-bonneted head until her brass earrings jangled. Finally she offered,
775 "I dohn guess yuh be bodduh much by duh spirits ef yuh
•764 gib em a good fewnul [36] an put duh tings wut belong tuh em on top uh duh grave." [47]

Uncle Ben helped with this explanation. "Yuh puts all duh tings wut dey use las, lak duh dishes an duh medicine bottle. Duh spirits need deze same as duh man. Den duh spirit res an dohn wanduh bout."

764 Aunt Sarah said that they went to set-ups and that in the
782 old days, after the mourners had arrived, a chicken was killed.[35, 37b, c] Neither Aunt Sarah nor Uncle Ben, however, knew the reason for this.

789 Catching sight of a few crudely made farm implements

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 bins cuz das wut mos folks make cunjuh outuh.[10] Ef dey git yuh haiah, yuh hab to do any ting dey wahn yuh tuh."

Alec stated solemnly, "Some folks is alluz sayin dat spirits is bodduhin um.[59] Nebuh hab trouble wid um muhsef."

[789] This was explained by Rachel who said that they knew a horse-shoe was an excellent remedy for "keeping duh hant away."[8]

"Witches come in at night an ride yuh too,"[69] said Alec. "Jis ride duh folks till some ub um gits so po dey jis pass way."

754 231 We asked if they had ever heard that a frizzled chicken could dig up conjure laid down for a victim and they both nodded in affirmation.

"Chicken kin sho dig up cunjuh.[13a] Alluz hab heah uh dat," they echoed.

115 Alec told us that he had been born three years before freedom. He dwelt for a time on those long-past days and recollected some of the customs that had been prevalent then.

533 764 202 763 "Use tuh alluz beat duh drum at fewnuls. Right attuh duh pusson die, dey beat um tuh tell duh udduhs bout duh fewnul. Dey beat a long beat. Den dey stop. Den dey beat anudduh long beat. Ebrybody know dat dis mean somebody die. Dey beat duh drum in duh nex settlement tuh let duh folks in duh nex place heah."[26]

202 We had previously been told of a similar means of communication employed by the people in this section in former years. At various points large metal discs were hung on [534] trees and posts. On these messages had been beaten out and relayed from place to place. In this manner the people were informed of dances, picnics, meetings, wakes, and other such gatherings.[26]

764 The old couple went on to describe what took place at a wake.

"Wen dey fix duh cawpse, dey put pennies on duh eyes an

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

764 dey put salt on duh stomach tuh keep it frum purgin. Ebrybody put duh hands on um tuh say good-bye.[31]

[533] "On duh way tuh duh grabe dey beat duh drum as dey is mahchin long.[34] Wen duh body is put in duh grabe, ebrybody shout roun duh grabe in a succle, singin an prayin. Each one trow a hanful uh dut in duh grabe." [28]

527 The conversation shifted to topics of a more cheerful nature and Rachel told us that in former years at harvest time, they had been in the habit of holding "crop suppuhs." [38]

Her face creased itself into a delightful grin and her eyes shone as she told us, "Dat sho wuz a big time. We hab a big feas. All night we shouts an in duh mawnin right at sunrise we pray an bow low tuh duh sun. Muh great-gran—she

[782] name Peggy—I membuh she pray ebry day, at sunrise, at noon, an at sunset. She kneel down wen she pray an at duh en she bow low tree times, facin duh sun."

535 Alec's thoughts in the meantime had turned to more trivial affairs. He went on to tell us about the various dances that are popular at the present-day social affairs.

"Cose we do duh Buzzud Lope," [17] he began. "Ebrybody knows dat. Den we alluz does anudduh dance. We calls it 'Come Down tuh duh Myuh.' We dance roun an shake duh han an fiddle duh foot. One ub us kneel down in duh middle uh duh succle. Den we all call out an rise an shout roun, an we all fling duh foot agen."

795 In answer to our question about river baptisms the old people informed us that they are still held in the section.

796 Alec described these. "We all sing an pray an duh preachuh pray tuh duh Lord. Cose duh candidate caahn be save less he reely want tuh be. Duh preachuh an duh candidates goes

[782] down in duh watuh. Den duh preachuh make a prayuh tuh

[783] duh ribbuh an duh ribbuh washes duh sin away." [63]

262 It is bad luck to eat certain types of food, Rachel told us.

777 This belief had never influenced Rachel or Alec but they

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

hollowed-out log set on legs served as a watering trough for the ox.

Susan told us about the death of her mother, Rachel La Conte, who had come from Liberty County. "She die right in dis house. Dey measure uh wid a string. Dey beat duh drum tuh tell ebrybody bout duh settin-up.[26] We all set up wid duh body. We hab a big wash pot full uh coffee an hab a big sack uh soda crackuh fuh duh folks.[27a, c] Ebrybody place dey han bery light on uh eahs an on uh nose an den dey say, 'Dohn call me. I ain ready fuh tuh go yit.'[30, 31]

"We bury uh by tawch light attuh dahk. Ebrybody mahch roun duh grabe in a succle. Ebry night attuh duh fewnul I put food on duh poach fuh duh spirit tuh come git it.[54, 58]

"In duh ole days dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people tuh duh fewnul.[24] Dey beat it slow—boom—boom—boom. Wen dey wannuh stuhrup duh folks fuh a dance aw frolic, dey beats duh drum fas. Den dey knows it ain fuh no fewnul an dat it's fuh a good time. Duh people neahby, wen dey heahs it, beats deah drum an das how dey sends a message so udduh folks gits it.[26]

"I kin membuh two kine uh drum. Deah wuz duh lill kittle drum. Hit wuz bout fifteen inches cross an tree an a half foot high. Dat wuz duh drum dey beat fuh a settin-up."

Susan, too, gave us a description of the river baptisms. "Dey baptize in duh watuh down at duh landin. All duh candidates is dressed in wite. Dey all confess deah sins an say dey want tuh be save.

"We all mahch long in a line an sing an pray. Wen we git tuh duh ribbuh bank, we stop an duh preachuh say a long prayuh tuh duh Lawd. Den duh preachuh take duh candidates one by one and dey go down in duh ribbuh. Duh preachuh he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh. Dey alluz bap-

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

longs tuh Huger Barrett an Ise one uh duh bes fiel hans on Picayune Plantation."

We interrupted the old woman's reminiscences about plantation days to question her about funeral customs.

"We didn alluz hab too much time fuh big fewnul in dem days cuz deah wuz wuk tuh be done an ef yuh ain do yuh wuk, yuh git whipped. Lots uh time dey jis dig a hole in duh groun an put duh body in it, but wenebuh we kin, we hab a settin-up."

We asked Aunty Jane if they used to provide plenty of food for the mourners.

"Yes'm, dey sho did hab regluh feastes in dem days, but tuhday, at mos settin-ups, yuh dohn git nuttn but coffee an bread.[37b, c] Den dey would cook a regluh meal an dey would kill a chicken in front uh duh doe, wring he neck an cook um fuh duh feas.[38c] Den wen we all finish, we take wut victuals lef an put it in a dish by duh chimley an das fuh duh sperrit tuh hab a las good meal.[38] We cubbuh up duh dish an deah's many a time Ise heah dat sperrit lif um. We ain preach duh suhmon wen we bury um but we waits a wile so's all duh relations kin come."

"Is it bad luck to steal from a grave?" we wanted to know.

"Bad luck?" repeated Aunty Jane. "Sho it bad luck. Dem dishes an bottles wut put on duh grabe is fuh duh sperrit an it ain fuh nobody tuh tech um.[44] Das fuh duh sperrit tuh feel at home.[47] Wen he die fah off, we bring um home tuh bury um, dohn leh no strainjuh be bury wid um. Yuh gib people wut ain belong tuh yuh anudduh piece uh groun tuh be bury in.[3] We alluz hab two fewnul fuh duh pusson. We hab duh regluh fewnul wen yuh die. Den once a yeah we hab one big preachin fuh ebrybody wut die dat yeah."[42]

Aunty Jane looked up slyly when we asked her if she believed in conjure.

"I ain belieb in um muhsef but deah's plenty wut do. Ise had Ellen Hammond libin wid me. She die las yeah. She sho

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

point Aunty Jane rose to give us an exhibition of two dances, the Buzzard Lope and the Snake Hip.[17]

Across the highway from Aunty Jane's settlement, about one mile north of Darien, back of a turpentine still, is an irregular settlement of small houses, most of which are enclosed by high dilapidated paling fences. Here Wallace Quarterman * occupied a cabin with his daughter, Abby Gibson. Wallace was old but with a clear mind, and he enjoyed a high standing in his community. We felt that he would know about the old beliefs and customs.

We left the highway on a narrow dirt road, little more than a path through the bush, and after much winding in and out we came upon a street of Negro cabins with their enclosed yards, vegetable patches, and tumbled down sheds. Wallace was sitting on the porch of Abby's house. Lizzie Sanders volunteered to be our guide and paid a visit to Wallace along with us.

We asked him how old he was and where he was born.

"Ise bawn July 14, 1844. Now figguh dat out fuh yuhsef, missus. Ise bawn at Sout Hampton, Libuty County, an I belong tuh Roswell King, but he done die long bout sometime in duh fifties an Ise sole fuh debt tuh Cunl Fred Waring on Skidaway Ilun. Ise bin bout fifteen wen I sen tuh Skidaway."

For a long time we had wanted to establish some connection with Skidaway Island that reached back before the War between the States. We questioned Wallace about the church on Skidaway.

"We sho did hab big time goin tuh chuch in doze days. Not many uh deze Nigguhs kin shout tuhday duh way us could den. Yuh needs a drum fuh shoutin."

We asked if they shouted to a drum then.

"We sho did. We beat a drum at duh chuch an we beat a drum on duh way tuh duh grabeyahd tuh bury um. We

* *Wallace Quarterman, Darien. Deceased autumn, 1938.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

533
534 walks in a long line moanin an we beats duh drum all duh
764 way." [24]

We inquired about the making of drums and the kinds of
534 drums.

[237] "We makes drums out uh sheep hide but we gottuh dry um an stretch duh skin obuh. Some makes it out uh holluh lawgs wid skin obuh duh en an some ub um is as long as tree feet." [25]

567 We asked the old man if he remembered any slaves that
829 were real Africans.

"Sho I membuhs lots ub um. Ain I sees plenty ub um? I membuhs one boatload uh seben aw eight wut come down frum Savannah. Dat wuz jis a lill befo duh waw. Robbie McQueen wuz African an Katie an ole man Jacob King, dey's all African. I membuhs um all. Ole man King he lib till he ole, lib till I hep bury um. But yuh caahn unduhstan much wut deze people say. Dey caahn unduhstan yo talk an you caahn unduhstan dey talk. Dey go 'quack, quack, quack,' jis as fas as a hawse kin run, an muh pa say, 'Ain no good tuh lissen tuh um.' Dey git long all right but yuh know dey wuz a lot ub um wut ain stay down yuh."

Did he mean the Ibos * on St. Simons who walked into the water?

"No, ma'am, I ain mean dem. Ain yun heah bout um? Well, at dat time Mr. Blue he wuz duh obuhseeuh an Mr. Blue put um in duh fiel, but he couldn do nuttn wid um. Dey gabble, gabble, gabble, an nobody couldn unduhstan um an dey didn know how tuh wuk right. Mr. Blue he go down one mawnin wid a long whip fuh tuh whip um good."

"Mr. Blue was a hard overseer?" we asked.

567 "No, ma'am, he ain hahd, he jis caahn make um unduh-
829 stan. Dey's foolish actin. He got tuh whip um, Mr. Blue,
789 he ain hab no choice. Anyways, he whip um good an dey

* *A group of slaves from the Ibo tribe refused to submit to slavery. Led by their chief and singing tribal songs, they walked into the water and were drowned at a point on Dunbar Creek later named Ebo (Ibo) Landing.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

000 Club. We followed the road for about two miles and came finally to a signpost directing us to turn right in order to reach the club. This section in former times had been occupied by extensive plantation holdings. Most of these estates had been deserted for years and now and then we saw a house, once evidently charming but now in a dilapidated and crumbling condition.

Through an old gateway to what had once been a prosperous estate we rode past acres now weed-grown and neglected. At last we came upon a one story white plantation house. Inside blinds were at all of the French windows and the wide floor boards gave indication that the house had probably been standing for about one hundred years.

115 The man for whom we were looking was plowing in a field at the rear. Baker's rugged build and his keen intellect made it difficult to believe that he was in his late seventies. For years he had acted as caretaker of the club and often lived in the plantation house, as it had been unoccupied for some time.

533 763 202 He had heard of the custom of beating drums to warn people of a recent death. He said, "Dey use tuh alluz beat duh drum aw blow duh hawn wen somebody die.[24] Dey beat two licks on duh drum, den dey stop, den dey beat tree licks. Wen yuh beat dat, yuh know somebody done die.[24, 26] Lots 534 [237] uh duh drums wuz home-made. Dey wuz made out uh goat skin aw coon skin wut stretch out obuh hoops.[25] Deah wuz tree sizes uh drums. Deah wuz duh big barrel drum. It wuz highuhn it wuz cross. Den deah wuz a lill drum frum twelve tuh fifteen inches wide an bout eighteen inches high. Duh udduh drum wuz duh medium size, kine uh in between duh udduh two. Duh big drum wuz duh one dey beat at duh wake. Dey use drums at dances an meetins, too.

• 764 "Wen we hab a fewnul, we all mahch roun duh grabe in a ring. We shout an pray."

795 783 We wanted to know if river baptisms were always held

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SAPELO ISLAND

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of
491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through
the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are de-
461 scendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an
easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing,
and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage
in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company
offices.

178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have
preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as
well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart
(493) (Plate XVI)[A] jogging along a tree shaded road is a familar
(412) sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius
we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in com-
(124) mon usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic
picture of survival elements that have persisted since the
days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new
country.

115 One of the oldest inhabititants is Katie Brown (Plate
XV),*[B] whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of
Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas
Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her
small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her
(123) head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive to
conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco
and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long
534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.
Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times.[33]
527 Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum,
rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin
plates.[32, 35] Dey shout an moob roun in succle an look lak
mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

•764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

* *Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.*

A, [See Category 493, plate following p. xxxii-U--Analyst]
B, [See Category 142, plates following p. xxxii-Q and R--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

764 "Yes'm, we hab set-ups wid duh dead, but I ain know bout killin chicken. At duh fewnul, dey kills hawg an hab[40] plenty tuh eat.[37b, c] Duh reason fuh dis is so dat sperrit hab plenty at duh las. Wen fewnul pruhcession gits tuh grabe-yahd, dey stops. I ain know wy dey do it but dey stops at duh gate, and dey ax leab tuh come in. Deah ain nobody at duh gate, but dey alluz ax jis duh same. Dey say, 'Fambly, we come tuh put our brudduh away in mudduh dus. Please leh us go tru gate.' "[60]

[775] 764 782

754 About conjure, however, the old woman was not very communicative. "I ain know bout cunjuh," she said. "I heahs bout spells on people, but I ain see um. Now shadduhs, I see um. One night comin down duh road, I git tuh place weah road tun, an I heah sumpm behine me runnin long close tuh groun. He got big long tus, dis long, an he tongue hangin out. He pas close tuh me, an he look a me. I see um good. He got long tick haiah lak Noofounlan. Deah ain nebuh bin dog lak um on ilun. He mus be shadduh.[54]

796 787

"Den one night, I come frum chuch wid huzbun. We gits tuh tun, I heahs sumpm agen. I looks, an deah is sumpm look lak man. Huzbun he ain see um. Den I heahs a stompin, an sumpm come by so close tuh me I kin mos tech um, an he tun tuh spotted ox. 'Budge,' I calls um wen dey changes lak dat. Dat spotted ox go gallopin off, an I say tuh huzbun, 'Yuh ain see um?' He say, 'Wut?' I say, 'Da spotted ox wut go pas down duh road an out in da fiel?' He say, 'I ain see nuttn.' Das wen I luns dat wen yuh see um, yuh musn talk bout um.

539 "No'm, I dunno no animal stories. I heah um, but I fuh-gits. I know bout lizzud an rabbit, dough. Yuh ain know bout lizzud an rabbit? Well, lizzud, he wuk hahd. He hab sode wut he cut crop wid, an it wuk by itsef an it cut so fine, nuttn lef.[39] Lizzud he speak wuds tuh it—it do all duh wuk. Now, rabbit, he smaht. He ain got no sode lak lizzud got an he wahn one. He hide behine bush, an he watch da sode

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 the current belief concerning the necessity of asking leave to enter the graveyard.

313 "Grant Johnson, he wannuh cut some wood an he git obuh
764 duh fence uh duh cimiterry," he explained to us. "He didn
764 ax leab uh nobody." He wuz a cuttin duh wood down as fas
782 as he could wen all ub a sudden he see a big black dog wut
[775] come attuh im. Dat wuz a shadduh an he ain lose no time in jumpin obuh duh fence.

764 "Wen yuh hab a fewnul eben today, yuh hab tuh ax leab
782 tuh entuh duh cimiterry gate. Duh spirit ain gonuh let
775 yuh in lessn yuh ask leab ub it."

115 We visited Nero Jones,* an elderly Negro who lived on his sixty-five-acre tract of land with a daughter, Henrietta. Sitting beneath the protecting shade of an arbor which overlooked a peanut field, the old man was busily engaged in shucking a large basket of the nuts.

527 He, too, remembered having seen harvest dances. "We
535 use tuh hab big time at hahves," he began. "We pray an sing duh night tru. Wen duh sun riz we go out an dance.
[534] We hab big beatin uh drums an sometimes we dry duh goads an leab duh seed in um. Dey make good rattle."

829 "I membuh Uncle Calina an An Hannah well. Dey
782 mighty ole an dey bun up in duh house. Day talk lot uh funny talk tuh each udduh an dey is mighty puhticuluh bout prayin. Dey pray on duh bead. Duh ole man he say 'Ameela' and An Hannah she say 'Hakabara.' "

361 Later we drove slowly over the flat grass-lands to Hog Hammock, another Negro community at the south end of
[136] Sapelo. The red-legged herons winging their way against the vivid blue of the sky, the dense foliage rimming the edges of the inland marshes, clumps of feathery bush, all contributed to the tropical beauty of the island.

115 At Hog Hammock we visited Shad Hall (Plate XVII),** A A

* *Nero Jones, Sapelo Island.*
** *Shad Hall, Sapelo Island.*

A, [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-V--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829 house. Dey sleep on hahd groun inside house. House wuz neah lill ilun weah dey ketch parrot and sell um."

"Do you remember any special kinds of food that your grandmother used to prepare?" we asked.

829 Shad, after pondering briefly, said, "She make strange
252 cake, fus ub ebry munt. She call it 'saraka.' She make it out uh meal an honey. She put meal in bilin watuh an take it right out. Den she mix it wid honey, and make it in flat cakes. Sometime she make it out uh rice. Duh cake made, she call us all in an deah she hab great big fannuh full an she gib us each cake. Den we all stands roun table, and she says, 'Ameen, Ameen, Ameen,' an we all eats cake."

829 We asked Shad what sort of animals his grandmother remembered seeing in Africa, and he said, "She say lion is duh mos powful uh beas. She say lion git up tree jis lak cat. Yuh come long unduh tree, an lion he reach down wid great paws an grab yuh—so. Snakes, dey big, too. Dey wrap deah tail roun tree an lean obuh an reach yuh, too."

829 Shad furnished us additional information regarding "set-
• 764 ups." "Yes'm, Gran Hestuh tell me uh set-ups. Dey kill a
915 wite chicken wen dey hab set-ups tuh keep duh spirits way.
789 She say a wite chicken is duh only ting dat will keep duh
231 spirits way an she alluz keep wite chicken fuh dat in yahd.[55] Lak dis. Hestuh, she hab frien an frien die. Ebry ebenin friens spirit come back an call tuh Hestuh.[56] Hestuh knowd ef she keep it up, she die too. Hestuh den kills wite chicken, tro it out uh doze, an shut doe quick. Wen she tro it out, she say, 'Heah, spirit, moob away—dohn come back no mo.' I dunno wut she do wid duh blood an fedduhs.

754 "Yes'm, I heah tell uh witches, but I ain see um. I know eel skin tie roun neck bring good luck an cuo yuh ef yuh sick. Yes'm, I see um bury sack unduh doe step tuh [11] pruhtec house; I see um tie rag tuh gate tuh pruhtec too.[11b, c] I ain know snake-skin bring good luck, but eel-skin, yes'm.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 "Yuh ain heah so much bout cunjuh on dis ilun, but deah's a few wut does a mighty lot uh talkin. Nellie Dixon, she lib right obuh deah in dem trees, she alluz talkin bout roots. She say somebody go tru duh yahd an drap a root fuhrum. She tote a sack roun uh neck tuh gahd um." [8, 12a, c, d]

115 567 When asked to whom he had belonged during slavery he answered, "Muh fus massuh Montally. He ole massuh. Young massuh wuz Massuh Tom Spalding. Den I belongs tuh Mike Spalding; dat befo freedom. Sometime duh ole folks call duh missus 'maduba' an duh massuh 'mahaba.' Yes'm I bin big man wen freedom come."

527 Shad remembered that during his childhood he had often witnessed harvest festivals and dances.

"Hahves time dey hab big time. It come once a yeah an dey pray an dey sing all night long till duh fus cock crow. Den dey staht tuh dance an tuh bow tuh duh sun as it riz in duh sky. Dey dance roun in a succle an sing an shout. Sho is a big time.[38]

• 764 782 "Wen yuh hab a buryin, yuh alluz hab tuh ask leab tuh duh grabeyahd. Dey do dat tuh dis day. Yuh say, 'Fambly, please let us lay yuh brudduh in mudduh dus.' " [60]

764 313 782 715 The story which Cuffy Wilson had already told us about Grant Johnson's having been chased from the graveyard by a shadow was also verified from this source. Shad told us, "Grant Johnson he go deah one time tuh cut wood widout askin leab. He busy cuttin wood wen all ub a sudden he see big black dog comin tuh um wid one paw raise an red eye an big grinnin teet.[54] Grant he ain lose no time in gittin way. Dat dog wuz shadduh wut come attuh um.

829 789 "Duh ole folks use tuh tell dat story bout duh hoe wut could wuk by itsef. It stan right up in duh fiel widout nobody holdin tuh it.[39] Das ef yuh knowd how tuh wuk it. Doze Africans knowd how tuh make dat hoe wuk an dey knowd how tuh wuk roots.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

821 796 over the horizon, they would start a sun-dance and bow to the sun.

• 764 [825] Death watches he knew nothing about, except present-day customs. However, he did say that the snake known as the coach-whip was sometimes wrapped around the neck of a person supposedly dead and its tail put in the person's mouth to see if he were still breathing.

527 We questioned young Smith about the festivals that the other Negroes had described and he told us that during the harvesting season various celebrations are still held.[36]

000 The boat neared the mainland. Our trip was over. As we bade goodbye to our guide, we cast a look of farewell at the dim outline of the tropical island. On the journey homeward impressions received during our stay on Sapelo crowded against one another in disturbing sequence. Innumerable memories assailed us. Faintly the echo of shouting rose and fell in the distance. The measured chanting of voices and the pounding of feet seemed to follow us across the water.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

grape arbor and spreading live oaks. On the side road stood three stately pine trees from which hung silvery festoons of Spanish moss. Catherine was black, small, and lively at sixty-nine.

"Ise bawn in Meridian," she said, "but Ise lib mos muh life heah. Muh people belong tuh duh Atwoods uh Darien an tings heah on duh ilun is pretty much duh way dey wuz deah. Some tings is changed wut hadduh change, lak wen we hab a fewnul duh unduhtakuh come an git duh body an dey dohn lak yuh tuh hab no settin-up. In duh ole days we would sing an make prayuh all night an dey would come an measure duh body wid a string tuh make duh coffin tuh bury em in. Dey use tuh alluz sen yuh home tuh bury [1] ef dey could git duh money but dey ain eben alluz do dat no mo. Dey nebuh use tuh bury no strainjuhs in duh buryin [2] groun but heah dat ain kep strick needuh."

We asked about the dances and festivals of her youth.

"We use tuh hab big times duh fus hahves,[33] an duh fus ting wut growed we take tuh duh chuch so as ebrybody could hab a piece ub it. We pray obuh it an shout. Wen we hab a dance, we use tuh shout in a ring. We ain hab wut yuh call a propuh dance tuhday.

"One uh duh dances wuz call duh Buzzud Lope.[17] It's a long time sence we done it, but I still membuh it. We ain hab much music in doze days but dey use a drum tuh call duh people tuhgedduh wen dey gonuh hab games aw meetin.[36] It sho bin a long time sence I tought bout dem days."

Catherine told us that Ryna Johnson, who lived about a mile down the Harrington Road, was one of the oldest people on the island. Leaving the main highway, we followed the narrow, less traversed side road. It was a heavily wooded section. We viewed the massive-trunked hoary oak trees through a misty curtain of hanging moss. The fences along the road were covered with honeysuckle and wild grape. Shortly before we arrived at our destination, the road divided

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115
(351) the house. Across the road to the left was a field which had been planted in corn.

Charles, a medium-sized, intelligent man, very black of skin and rather small-featured, talked to us about his people.

(165) "Dey is long libin people," he began. "Muh fathuh lib until he a hundud an muh mothuh wuz ninety wen she die. Muh gran, she name Louise an come frum Bahama Ilun.* She lib tuh hundud an fifteen. Das duh way dey do an I guess I'll do duh same."

178 Did the people around Harrington believe in the old customs the way his mother and grandmother had believed in them?

"Yes'm, dey sticks tuh em but duh times is changin an yuh hab tuh change wid em. Duh unduhtakuh come now an (764) mone lakly he bring yuh back tuh duh chuch an dey ain no watch an singin."

795 In the course of our talk he told us that the river baptisms were held by members of the local churches. "Yes'm, we still baptize in duh ribbuh," Charles said. "We hab one not long ago. We hab tuh wait till a Sunday wen a ebb tide (783) come at a good time, cuz it duh ebb tide wut carry yuh sin away."[63]

754 Charles confirmed what the other residents had told us regarding conjure.

"Well, dey's some belieb in cunjuh an some wut dohn. (753) Dey's lots wut say sickness ain natchul an somebody put sumpm down fuh yuh.[15] I ain belieb in it much muhsef but 829 dey's curious tings happen. Now, wen I wuz a boy deah's a root makuh wut lib yuh name Alexanduh. He wuz African an he say he kin do any kine uh cunjuh wut kin be done an he kin cuo any kine uh disease.[48] He wuz a small man, 789 slim an bery black. Alexanduh say he could fly.[68b, 69c] He (567)

*A number of slaves accompanied their masters from the West Indies to this country. It was also the custom for slave ships to stop at the Bahamas en route to America with a cargo.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829 567 Asked if he remembered any other Africans who tied their heads up, the old man told us, "I membuh a ole uhmun name Daphne. He didn tie he head up lak ole man Israel. He weah loose wite veil on he head. He wuz shahp-feechuh too an light uh complexion. He weah one ring in he eah fuh he eyes.[27] I hab refrence to it bein some kine uh pruhtection [782] tuh he eyes. Wen he pray, he bow two aw tree times in duh middle uh duh prayuh."

535 We asked about the music they used to have and what they used for dancing in the old days.

"We ain dance den duh way dey dances now. We dance [533] roun in a succle an den we dances fuh prayin.[19a] I membuhs [534] we use tuh hab drums fuh music an we beat duh drum fuh dances.[23]

764 533 "Now, ole man Dembo he use tuh beat duh drum tuh duh fewnul,[24] but Mr. Couper he stop dat. He say he dohn wahn drums beatin roun duh dead. But I watch em hab a fewnul. I gits behine duh bush an hide an watch an see wut dey does. Dey go in a long pruhcession tuh duh buryin groun an dey beat duh drums long duh way an dey submit duh body tuh duh groun. Den dey dance roun in a ring an dey motion wid [535] duh hans.[18] Dey sing duh body tuh duh grabe an den dey let it down an den dey succle roun in duh dance.

567 782 "Dey ain hab no chuch in doze days an wen dey wannuh pray, dey git behine duh house aw hide someweah an make a great prayuh. Dey ain suppose tuh call on duh Lawd; dey hadduh call on duh massuh an ef dey ain do dat, dey git nine an tutty.

567 [585] [795] [783] "Dey ain marry den duh way dey do now. Attuh slabery dey hadduh remarry. Dey hab big baptizin in duh ribbuh lak dey do tuhday an dey dip em on duh ebb tuh wash duh sins away an duh preachuh he make a great prayuh tuh duh ribbuh.[62]

534 "Ole man Okra he a great un fuh buil drum.[25] He take a calf skin an tan it an make duh side uh maple. Ise pretty

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829 [567] ple an dey all say dey plant duh crop an dey dohn hadduh wuk it. I heah lot ub em tell how dey git obuh yuh. Dey trap em on a boat wid a red flag."

759 Old Tom Floyd was not the only root doctor Floyd could remember. There were many others, he said, some still living and plying their trade.[48]

"I knows a root makuh now," he told us. "Uncle Quawt, he root makuh. Does yuh know him?"

We replied that we had known Quarterman for some time but that he had never told us he could work roots.

759 754 789 "Maybe he ain tell yuh but he kin wuk em all right.[48] He kin put a cunjuh on wid a goofa bag as good as anybody. Now, I tell yuh bout im. Deah's two felluhs in Brunswick wut does a lill killin an wen duh case is call, two buzzud light on duh cote house an wen duh men come up befo duh jedge, he let um go free. Now, Uncle Quawt, he had sumpm tuh do wid dat. Dey ain so many root makuhs lef."

829 Floyd, too, had heard of Alexander, the old African root maker.

"Yes'm, Ise heahd much bout im. He wuz still libin wen I wuz a boy. Ise heahd em tell plenty uh tales bout im. Dey say duh boat leab fuh Savannah an Alexanduh he yuh. He say good-bye frum yuh an tell em tuh go on widout im but he say he see em deah an wen duh boat git tuh Savannah, Alexanduh he in Savannah on duh dock tuh ketch duh line."

534 535 Pleasant memories associated with the social activities of the past caused Floyd to ponder abstractedly for a time. Finally he roused himself and told us, "We use tuh dance roun tuh a drum an a rattle goad. Dey could make good drum frum hawg an bass drum frum cow.[25] Doze days dey

533 ain only beat duh drum fuh dancin; dey beat it on duh way

• 764 tuh duh grabe yahd.[26] Dat wuz fuh duh det mahch wen dey use tuh carry duh body in a wagon. Dey hab lot uh singin

[795] den too an dey hab singin at duh baptizin. Den dey baptize

[196] em in duh ribbuh jis lak dey does now. Dey sing wid all duh

[783]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

775 We asked Uncle Jim if he could see spirits. "No'm, I ain
(845) nevuh seen em. I wuzn bawn with a caul [4] an I caahn see em.
Now, muh brothuh he kin see em cuz he wuz bawn with a
caul. He see em all the time. Spirits is alluz roun in time
775 of fewnuls an wen a pusson die, we have a settin-up and then
764 we leave sumpm wut we got tuh eat in a dish by him to eat [54]
—that is, we use tuh do that—an we put salt on em in the ole
days an we go up to em an we put our hands on theah chest
to bid em feahwell." [31]

764 We asked Uncle Jim if they used to have night funerals
in the old days. "No'm, we alluz have our fewnuls in the
day time but my great granmothuh, now, she say in Africa
they have night fewnuls."

115 We asked him to tell us more of his African great grand-
mother.

"Muh great gran, huh name wuz Bina; thas all we know
uh by. She brought up muh mothuh cuz muh gran got bun
up in uh house wen muh mothuh wuz two days ole."

We asked him if he remembered her well. "Yes'm, I wuz
a big boy about fifteen wen she die an they all say she wuz
a hundud an thutty yeahs ole at that time. She sho ole, I
know dat, but she remembuh plenty. She tell us chillun so
much I caahn remembuh all them things."

829 We asked again about night funerals. "She jis say they
567 have em at night but she didn say wy. She did say they
alluz kill a wite chicken at the time they go to bury em an
they take the blood an feathuhs an they do sumpm special
with em but I ain unduhstood how it is.[35a, b] I tell you wut
she tell me, how she get heah on a big boat an she lan down
theah on Cumberland Ilun on a big dock in the time of Mr.
Nightingale an she say they put em in a lill pick house to
keep em safe an the chimbly of that same lill house is standin
about two hundud yahds out in the rivuh off Cumberland
tuhday."

829 We asked if she had told him how they lived in Africa

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

829 wen she go tuh eat an she alluz eat out of a wooden bowl. Sometimes she use a spoon, but mos of the time she jis eat with uh finguhs. Muh granfathuh use tuh set with uh an talk. They talk a lot an speak the African wuds an souns. I ain know wut they talk bout, mosly bout the times in Africa I think. One soun aw wud I membuh they say wuz 'cupla' but wut it mean I sho dohn know.

415 "Fuh the longes time I have a wooden bowl [7q] bout lak the one Nanny Mammy have. It wuz holluhed out jis as smooth, an it wuz made of some kine uh dahk wood. Not long ago muh wife say she ain see da bowl in monuh yeah. She think mebbe one uh the chillun, muh grans I mean, mustuh misplace it someway.

252 "Theah's a lot uh things I membuh at the plantation. Muh grandmothuh, Sally, she make the bes rice cakes. She make em with brown shuguh. She ain mix em up with honey. I seed em make home-made drums theah too. They 534 stretch a sheep-hide ovuh a roun bucket.[25] Then they beats 533 the drum in the fewnul cession wen they mahches tuh the 764 buryin groun.[24] Long then wen a pusson die they have a settin-up [37a] an have a suppuh too.[37b, c] Theah wuz an still 764 is pussons wut put a dish uh food out on the poach fuh the 782 spirit, but some of em take cooked food tuh the grave an leave it theah fuh the spirit.[56] They say, too, that a frizzle 754 chicken kin dig up any kine uh cunjuh.[13] Theah's a lot uh 231 talk bout cunjuh these days mung the young folks, even mo 825 than in the ole days." [15]

115 A short while later, our interview concluded, we thanked the old man for the information and took our leave. Looking back we saw him sitting on the steps of his house, his gray head bent, to all appearances lost in a reverie of the past.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

763 456 them to take over the policies, and the children, knowing the importance of proper burial, usually do so gladly.

764 [171] [175] When an islander has moved away and then died, every possible effort is made to return the body to the island for burial among relatives and friends. The desire to be buried at home is also very common among the Igbo, Yoruba, and other Nigerian peoples, who believe without question that the dead are dependent on their ancestors for spiritual nourishment and thus must be buried among them to find peace.[50] By ongoing tradition, Sea Island burial places are densely wooded and are considered to be the sacred abodes of the spirits.

764 175 [178] A burial tradition once practiced widely on the Sea Islands and in rural areas of the deep South, though it is now dying out, is the placing of articles such as pottery, spoons, dishes, and other items belonging to the deceased person on the grave, in case the deceased might need or want them in afterlife. Even those scholars hesitant to ascribe other practices observed on the islands to African influences have readily accepted the African basis of this tradition.[51] I have seen the same [171] practices among the Igbo and Ibebio, and it was at one time not unusual in West Africa for boxes of the dead person's possessions—clothes, hardware, and crockery, for example—to be laid by the body, which was not interred but left on top of the ground and covered with branches and leaves.[52]

764 On the Sea Islands children's graves were traditionally decorated with favorite toys, broken glasses and cups, and money banks always containing a few pennies. The islanders could not explain why the glasses and cups were broken before they were put on a grave. Some said that it was done to decrease the chance of someone's stealing the items; others commented they were merely copying what they had always seen done. The old customs, however, are now being replaced [178] for both children and adults by the use of fancy headstones and cement vaults, which have come to be thought more prestigious signs of one's love for the deceased person.

Sea Island funerals are often very sad and solemn occasions, but they are also very emotional, as are most of the religious services. People attend a funeral to pay their respects to the deceased, but even more to pay their respects to the deceased's family. Each person is given a funeral as elaborate as the family and friends can make it, and the church is packed as full for the funeral of a young child as it would

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 28]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

.764

The Sea Islanders have traditionally buried their dead in densely wooded areas. These areas are considered sacred and are thought to harbor the spirits of the deceased.

[718]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their masters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal industrial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

had often been hospitalized for short periods for her condition. She finally lost the battle or, as some islanders said, she finally won the battle, staked her sword in the golden sand, and went home to the Kingdom of God on 4 July 1984. Mr. Hampy was told, and he died the next day, 5 July. Some said that the couple had been together so long that his spirit had become a part of hers and that when she died, he died simply because he lacked the will to live without her. Others commented that since her body remained warm so long after her death, she was waiting for him to follow.

Their funeral was one of the most elaborate I have seen in the Sea Island area. The cost was well in excess of fifteen thousand dollars, a total which the couple had prepared for over the years by paying on their funeral policy. They had matching blue caskets with intricate gold designs. Hers was covered with a spread of pink flowers, his with a spread of blue ones. The undertaker was careful with such details as having her coffin brought in first and stationing her coffin to the left of his. These were things that the viewers would observe and remember when they selected someone to handle their own funeral arrangements.

The Presbyterian church was packed beyond capacity, and I stood outside the door of the church along with other friends hoping to see the couple one last time. Two male associates had accompanied me to the funeral and stood among the other men on the church ground, chatting. As a female, I knew that I was not permitted this liberty. Women do not stand outside the church and chat when services are going on. If they cannot get inside the church, they stand as close to it as possible or remain in their cars. In a break with custom, the caskets were not opened for viewing the bodies; I walked with others more than two miles up a long, narrow, muddy lane to the gravesite, still hoping to see their faces. However, before I made it up the lane, they had passed the younger children over the caskets to prevent their spirits from being "touched" by the spirits of the dead. As is traditional, they buried Mr. Hampy and Miss Maime side by side, she on his left, in a densely wooded area to help enclose their spirits. Each grave was covered with flowers and clocks were set at the time each one died.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

764
805

Placing a clock on the grave of the deceased to depict the hour of death is still a strong tradition.

[p. 14]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

• 764
551

It is a common African practice to give people names that represent personal characteristics. It is not unusual for a Sea Islander to be named for the day of the week or month of the year in which he was born.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

825
538

protective coating like Ber Cooter. He cannot fly like Ber Buzzard or remain aloof on a high perch like the owl. His only defense is his wit, and his wit he puts to good use in the tales told about him on the Sea Islands. Knowing his habits well, perhaps the islanders find him more deserving of the titles "trister" and "sporty little animal" than any of the other animals they come in contact with.

82

36. The islanders' interactions with the natural environment go beyond the economic. The children become amateur oceanographers and learn to foretell the weather by the humidity and color of the sun at given times of the day, and the manner in which it sets in the evening. They learn to gauge time within minutes in a furrowed field by counting the number of rows that a shadow covers at certain times of the day, as well as by the distance of the sun as it moves from "day clean"—sunrise—to "out the light"—sunset. "Island time" is important because the inhabitants fish, crab, and shrimp only when the tide reaches certain levels coming in or going out. Water is a subject of much symbolism among the older islanders. Once one has partaken of the Sea Island water, one is thought to have a right to live on the islands. But as I was informed, in no uncertain terms, the water must be *offered* by an older, native-born member of high social esteem for that right to be legitimized.

[805]
[554]
000

37. On this point see, for example, Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 61–63.

38. Winifred Owens (personal communication).

113

39. Mary Arnold Twining, "An Examination of African Retention in the Folk Culture of the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1977), p. 175.

000

40. Ibid.; Owens (personal communication).

113

41. Greg Day, *South Carolina Low Country Coil Baskets* (Charleston, S.C.: Charleston Communication Center, n.d.).

42. Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource," p. 37.

43. William Demerson (Bamidele Ade Agbasebe), *The Role of Wife in The Black Extended Family: Perspectives from a Rural Community in the Southern United States*, New Research on Women and Sex Roles (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1974), p. 135. Demerson is an anthropologist who has spent several years in the Sea Island area.

44. Ibid., p. 130.

45. Ibid., p. 135.

46. For further discussion see Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 141–63, especially p. 144.

47. W. D. Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America* (1924; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 44.

48. See John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1970), p. 209.

49. Quoted in Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Status of Gullah: An Investigation of Convergent Processes" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1978), p. 134. See also Appendix 3 herein.

50. Georgia Writers Project, *Drums and Shadows*, p. 236.

764
178
171

51. Crum, for example, does not acknowledge the influence of African languages

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

764
178
171
113

on the speech of the islands, but he does, without qualification, admit the African origin of the traditional burial customs (*Gullah*, p. 97).

52. Robert Hamill Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), p. 218.

53. Emory Campbell (personal communication), Penn School Center, Frogmore, S.C.

54. Quoted in Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Oral Tradition of Prayer in Gullah," *Journal of Religious Thought* 39, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1982): 22.

55. See Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941).

56. Jennett Robinson Murphy, *Southern Thought for Northern Thinkers* (New York, 1904), p. 23, quoted in Crum, *Gullah*, p. 144.

Chapter 2

1. See Joel Chandler Harris, *Nights with Uncle Remus: Myths and Legends of the Old Plantation* (New York, 1883); Charles C. Jones, *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast Told in the Vernacular* (Boston, Mass., 1888; reprint, Columbia, S.C.: State Co. 1925); Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folklore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Folklore Society, 1923); and Ambrose Gonzales, *With Aesop along the Black Border* (Columbia, S.C.: The State Co., 1924).

2. See Charles Joyner, "Slave Folklife on the Waccamaw Neck" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977); or Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 172–195, especially pp. 190–91.

538 3. The *he* is for convenience; Sea Island storytellers can be women but are more usually men (see the next section of this chapter).

113 4. Lee Haring, "A Characteristic African Folktale Pattern," and Phillip Noss, "Description in Gbaya Literary Art," both in *African Folklore*, ed. Richard Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); and Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Audience in Gullah and Igbo: A Comparison of Oral Traditions," *College Language Association Journal* 27, no. 2 (December 1983): 197–209.

5. DeCamp, "Toward a Generative Analysis," p. 369.

6. Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1974), pp. 43–44.

7. Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 80–81.

8. Alfred Hayes, "Paralinguistics and Kinesics: Pedagogical Perspectives," in *Approaches to Semiotics*, ed. Thomas Sebeok, Alfred S. Hayes, and Mary C. Bateson (London: Mouton Publishers, 1964), pp. 158–59.

9. Richard Dorson, *Negro Tales from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Calvin, Michigan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 52.

000 10. "Description in Gbaya Literary Art," p. 74.

11. Finnegan, *Limba Stories*, p. 68.

12. Interview courtesy of WHMM TV and South Carolina ETV, from the documentary film *When Roots Die*, 1985.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

by features of traditional African religion and philosophy not transferable or appliable to the New World situation. In this way the Gullahs gradually developed a holistic religion with components of both experiences. The helplessnss implicit in the Christian motif was a central ingredient of Methodist teaching. But one need not seek an explanation for identification with Christianity in Methodism alone, with its prostrating sense of fatalism. Aside from biblical example, and need for a complete world view, the Gullahs' own ill-fated lives and the frequent occurrence of untimely deaths were often sufficient to bring forth the poetry from within. The following Sea Island torchlight burial is an example of the kind of tragic scene that might well motivate the creation of a spiritual:

> On one occasion of burial, I have reason to believe much good was done. A woman, who was a member of the Church, and who had died in full hope of immortal life, was to be buried at night, it being the most convenient time for the people to be together. Accordingly I met the people at the time appointed. The plantation being large, many were present. The corpse was conveyed about a quarter of a mile to the burial ground, the procession moving slowly and silently along, with lighted torches interspersed through the ranks. This presented a solemn scene; but after we arrived at the burying place it was still more solemn. A grove standing in the midst of a large clearing, which had been sacredly kept for years as belonging to the dead, undisturbed even by the footsteps of man, except when another was to be laid in the earth, and under the shade of the cedars. Here we all met in the midst of the grove, around the grave. It was a dark night, but in the midst of the grove it was still more dark. All was silent, except the thrilling note of the whippoorwill, who had made this lonely retreat its home; all around us lay the graves of the dead of all sizes. The reflection from many torches presented them full in view in every direction, as though they had but just been closed; so thick was the shade above that no grass grew on that spot. I have attended many of my fellow beings to the grave; but never did I witness a more solemn time, and yet I felt it a blessed time. I felt it a duty to try and improve the occasion of our being together; and indeed it was a time of weeping—some of the most stubborn were melted into tears. The husband of the deceased and her infant child were near the grave; he, before a careless man, now wept aloud—and since that period has shown his grief was not of a worldly kind; he has offered himself to the Church, and his child he has had baptized. Many others on the plantation have become serious, and are now on trial.[46]

The spectacle of this young woman's funeral and the presence of the white missionary preaching the prospect of life after death aroused thoughts of the finality of human life and generated desires to transcend reality and be projected into a peaceful future existence. More than likely a

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

175 764 533

burial scene such as the one above prompted the creation of a most poignant Gullah spiritual. It was recorded during the Civil War by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Commander of the First South Carolina Volunteers. He considered it "the most poetic of all their songs."

(539)

I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;
Lay dis body down.
I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight
To lay dis body down.
I'll walk in de graveyard, I'll walk through de graveyard,
To lay dis body down.
I'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;
Lay dis body down.
I go to de Judgment in de evinin' ob de day
When I lay dis body down.
And my soul and your soul will meet in de day
When I lay dis body down.[47]

175 791 799 567

Certainly Gullahs wanted to believe in a bondless futurity, and many accepted assurances of the missionaries, if not their discipline. Undoubtedly, a number of Gullahs felt that their existence on earth offered so little and mortal doom was so certain that nothing was gambled by adopting Christianity. Their imaginations and aspirations were quickened by inspiring parables, stimulating renditions of undeserved agonies of the long-suffering man-god, his earthly demise, and ultimate triumphant rebirth. The parallels were clearly hard to resist.

Thus it might appear that the hopes and expectations of planters such as C. C. Pinckney were realized—that as professors of Christianity, slaves resigned themselves to their circumstances in return for the hope of a heavenly future. Yet it is a mistake to interpret the Gullahs' acceptance of some Christian teachings as a reflection of negative attitudes toward earthly life. Nor did such teachings instill a sense of futility and resignation. Christianity as interpreted by the slaves did not induce them to disavow the present as much as it served to mitigate the inhumane features of their existence as slaves. For the Gullahs, Christianity was a spiritual release from anxieties, frustrations, and animosities, providing a frame of reference to understand their position as bondspeople. In this sense the religion of the slaveholders was diluted, becoming for the slaves a source of strength embodied in their use of Christian ideology as a personification of their will to freedom. Major emphasis of slave religion was not "otherworldly." What Gullahs accepted in Christianity did not

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

764•

Gullah decorated grave. (The Library, University of Oregon.)

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

and taking possession of them. Among the BaKongo, the curse of the dying is much dreaded, especially that of a relative, for the deceased will soon enter the spirit world. A dying person may admonish those around to take care of his or her affairs. "If you do not, I shall fetch you, and you will not become old here on earth." The dying one may also request the living to "wrap me well in the cloth that I leave," may insist that the living hold many lamentations after the death and care for the deceased's family. If not properly buried, the deceased might bring *kindoki* (evil).[12]

A curious example of the application of both African and Christian practices among the slaves is provided by a former South Carolina bondsman. According to the informant, a good-looking and very popular slave girl named Mary became ill and died after a lingering illness of four or six months' duration. The slaves on the surrounding plantations were sure that Mary had been conjured (poisoned) by a rival in a love triangle. The plantation proprietor, a Methodist minister, had Mary treated by his brother, a practicing physician. While the doctor was attending Mary, the slaves appealed to their own doctor, a plantation slave who also treated the young woman. But Mary died, and, according to the author, her funeral, which as was traditional took place at night, "was the largest ever held in all that region of the country":

> The coffin, a rough home-made affair, was placed upon a cart, which was drawn by an old Gray, and the multitudes formed in a line in the rear, marching two deep. The procession was something like a quarter of a mile long. Perhaps every fifteenth person down the line carried an uplifted torch. As the procession moved slowly toward "the lonesome graveyard" down by the side of the swamp, they sung the well-known hymn of Dr. Issac Watts:
>
> "When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I bid farewell to every fear
> And wipe my weeping eyes."

Mary's baby was taken to the graveyard by its grandmother, and before the corpse was deposited in the earth, the baby was passed from one person to another across the coffin. The slaves believed that if this was not done it would be impossible to raise the infant. The mother's spirit would come back for her baby and take it to herself.

After this performance the corpse was lowered into the grave and covered, each person throwing a handful of dirt into the grave as a last farewell act of kindness to the dead, and while this was being done the leader announced that other hymn by Dr. Watts:

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

"Hark! from the tomb a doleful sound
My ears, attend the cry;
Ye living men, come view the ground
Where you must shortly lie."

. . . A prayer was offered. . . . This concluded the services at the grave. No burial or commital service was read. . . . At a subsequent time, when all the relatives and friends could be brought together a big funeral sermon was preached by some of the antebellum negro preachers.

The presence of a plantation slave "doctor" is reminiscent of the BaKongo *nganga*, who employed life-affirming *nkisi* to heal and ward off bad medicine or *kindoki*. The charm did not work for the plantation slave, and the large funeral turn-out may represent the people's desire to protect themselves from whatever evil had caused Mary's death as well as to express their respect. Passing the woman's baby back and forth over her coffin was a well-known Gullah graveside custom. "Dead moder will hant de baby," Gullahs explained, and "worry him in his sleep." A similar custom among the BaKongo was women crossing back and forth over the graveside of a woman who died in childbirth, hoping that such a fate would not befall them. Singing at the grave was also part of the BaKongo send-off. The funeral, a lavish affair, would take place when all members of the clan could gather and when enough food could be collected.[13]

Thus another aspect of Gullah religion was a syncretic blend of belief in the efficacy of Christian salvation, the prevalence of the living dead, and the awesome powers of conjuration. It was sometimes difficult to determine where they believed the most power rested. At any rate, their expression, "Love God and fear the devil" indicates that, as a precautionary measure, they preferred to respect the authority and domain of both. For Gullahs saw no contradiction in being firm proponents of the Baptist faith and protecting themselves against forces of the supernatural as well. In spite of the Gullahs' strong profession of Christianity, Laura Towne noted that "They believe in the evil eye, and also in the power of a good eye for healing," and that "they are afraid of being alone at night, or of sleeping alone, for fear 'the hag will ride we.' " A slaveholding South Carolina minister remembered Elihu, a "devout, old creditable deacon" of the church and highly respected exhorter in the slave quarters. Upon passing the old man's cabin, the owner observed an inverted horseshoe over the door. Since Elihu's skill as a hostler was well known, the owner

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

assumed that the horseshoe was a "professional sign." However, the insignia was instead a charm against supernatural agencies:

> "What is that over your door Elihu?"
> "Dat for witches, Massa."
> "For what?"
> "Witches, Massa. Nebber sleep, no how, widout horseshoe to keep out de witches."[14]

Thus, besides the Christian version of immortality, elements of African tradition also accounted for the Gullahs' attitude toward death, as indeed it did in their attitude about life. As previously stated, existence of spirits of the deceased was not only central to African ontology, but these beings constituted the largest group of religious intermediaries. Hence, Africans viewed death as perhaps the most important rite of passage rather than as the demise of life. Death was a momentous transition, requiring demonstrative evidence that the physical presence of the deceased would be missed. But it was just as necessary to celebrate this passage into the spirit world in a manner that indicated a continued existence. Africans believed that the spirit which survived the body was conscious of all earthly events and had the power to exercise influence over the destiny of the living. Consequently, the death of a clan member was observed with greatest respect and the death commemoration had to be expressed collectively.[15]

Ancestors were said to retain their normal human passions and appetites which had to be gratified in death as they had been in life. Ancestors felt hunger and thirst. They became angry or happy depending on the behavior of their living "children." If neglected, the living dead were vindictive, but propitious if respected. Just as filial loyalty prevents one from allowing a parent to go hungry, "so must food be offered to the ancestors." Among the BaKongo, food was put out immediately after the burial and palm wine poured over the grave. Survivors believed the deceased would eat the food, and bless those who placed it there.[16]

Among the Gullahs, even for one who "died good," the spirit could not rest if something had been left behind which it desired. It was observed that the Gullahs and other African-Americans placed articles on newly formed graves. These objects were usually personal belongings, broken pottery and porcelain, playthings, lighting utensils, objects pertaining to medicine, food, and water. According to the antebellum mem-

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

ories of Telfair Hodgson, a number of her father's slaves came directly from Africa. The slaves' graves were "always decorated with the last articles used by the departed, and broken pitchers, and broken bits of colored glass were considered even more appropriate than the white shells from the beach nearby." Sometimes the slaves also carved "wooden figures like images of idols," or put a "patchwork quilt" on the grave. One twentieth-century investigator, Samuel Lawton, was told by a number of Sea Island ministers that it was also a common custom to bury articles along with the dead:

> You must not think that just because you do not find anything on those graves that the relatives did not put some things in there. It is most likely that they have a number of things buried with the body. I have often, at the burials I have conducted, seen the relatives pour hamper baskets full of things right down on top of the coffin before the dirt is shoveled into the grave.[17]

The custom of putting objects both in and on top of graves can be traced to African origins. The Ovimbundu place articles such as baskets, gourds, and instruments used in the burial on top of grave sites. Peoples in the Kongo were said to "mark the final resting-places of their friends by ornamenting their graves with crockery, empty bottles, old cooking-pots, etc." Many ethnic groups of the Windward Coast believed that it was necessary to provide the dead with various gifts, domestic articles, and clothing that could be of use in the life beyond the grave. Such articles, along with food and water, would be left at the grave, so that the spirit of the deceased would come and claim them.[18]

Although the Gullahs believed in two spirits, it was the "trabblin" spirit rather than the heaven-going spirit which caused the greatest concern. The reasons given for grave adornment clearly indicate the African precedent. One informant related:

> Yo' see, suh, everybody got two kinds ob speerits. One is der hebben-goin' speerit. . . . Den dere is de trabblin' speerit. . . . De hebben-goin' speerit don't gib you no trouble, but de trabblin' speerit, 'e be de one dat gib you worriment. E come back to de t'ings 'e like. E try fur come right back in de same house.[19]

Some Africans regarded their essential being as divided into "little me in the big me." Apparently "little me" existed before life and would continue to exist after death in the spirit world. This relates to the Gullah informant's idea of two kinds of spirits. The heaven-going spirit, "little me," depending on how one died, would, after death, rest in the

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

spirit world while the traveling spirit would torment the living. Hence, Gullahs asserted that the last used articles were buried with the deceased to "keep de speerit outen de house." This would go along with the Gullah practice of thoroughly cleaning the deceased's house to break earthly ties. Another explanation which the Gullahs offered was "to satisfy de speerit at de grave." It was said that the spirit desired to be near objects that it loved before death. "Yessuh," stated one informant, "dey puts t'ings on de grave so dey be handy fur de speerit and he be satisfy."[20]

Like Africans, Gullahs had a definite revulsion against the return of the deceased in the form of "trabblin' speerits" regardless of the kind of life the individual had lived. These spirits were considered evil, similar to *kindoki* among the BaKongo. Every effort was made to pacify these "speerits." This is further illustrated by the presence of whiskey bottles on the graves in churchyards. A Gullah minister provided the following explanation:

> When a man is living it take liquid whiskey in he stomach to make him drunk, but when a man is dead he don't hab a stomach to hol' de liquor, but it don't take nuttin' but de fumes from whiskey to make a speerit drunk. Dose dat bin used to gittin' drunk fo' dey dies, dey will keep on gittin' drunk after dey dies, so dey t'ink dat de speerit ob a drunkard will hover right in front ob de mout' ob a livin' person when he bin drinkin' so he can whiff de fumes ob de whiskey on he bre't an' dat will make de speerit drunk. But ain't no livin' man want no speerit hover right dere in front ob he mount', so dat is why dey puts whiskey bottles on de drunkard's grave. De whiskey bottles on de graves is empty 'cause de smell is enough to satisfy de speerit an' make 'en drunk.[21]

Gold Coast Africans believed that the spirits made use of all offerings left by friends and relatives after death. Mende carried to the graveside cooked chicken together with rice and red palm oil. This mixture was placed on a banana leaf and laid by the side of the grave. Sometimes soil was dug out and the red rice placed in a hole. Then a little water was placed on the grave and words were spoken: "Here is water, wash your hands, eat your rice, drink your water." The family then ate the remainder of the chicken and rice and offered a prayer, indicating that the family had done right by the deceased and expected the dead to remain there and to protect them:

> We are leaving you as we have finished your last ceremony. We want you, from now on, to look after your children (other members of the family may be mentioned). May no bad thing fall on them.[22]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Similarity of beliefs and motives regarding grave adornment is best illustrated by the types of articles found on graves in the Sea Islands. Such objects as partially filled medicine bottles, mirrors, broken pitchers, saucers and cups, mayonnaise jars, pickle jars, vaseline, cold cream, tobacco, and black pepper were placed on graves. Seashells were also commonly placed on graves. Other personal items included shaving brushes, toothbrushes, mirrors, combs, and belt buckles. In addition, twelve Gullah ministers reported to Samuel Lawton that other articles of food such as grapes, oranges, apples, bananas, bread, and cake were often placed on graves and soon eaten by animals and birds. Further efforts to satisfy the spirits of the dead consisted of pouring water on the grave during a drought. This custom could have been for the purpose of quenching the thirst of the spirit so that the dead would not disturb the living by seeking water.[23]

Gullah decoration of graves indicates a firm belief in the return of ancestors from the world of the dead. Offerings on graves were statements of homage and in these graveyards, one finds the strongest expressions of African-inspired memories. Many objects are associated with or used to hold water. In BaKongo religion, deceased ancestors became white creatures called *bakulu*. They lived in the village of the dead, referred to as the land of all things white. This village was located under river beds and lakes. *Bakulu's* white spiritual transparency allowed them to return to the world of the living undetected. Sea shells, used on Gullah graves, for instance, are an important theme in BaKongo metaphysics. One BaKongo prayer which addresses the shells states, "As strong as your house, you shall keep my life for me. When you leave for the sea, take me along, that I may live forever." The essence of this prayer is recaptured by the late Bessie Jones of St. Simons Island, Georgia. She related:

> The shells stand for the sea. The sea brought us, the sea shall take us back. So the shells upon our graves stand for water, the means of glory and the land of demise.[24]

Just as sea shells and pottery express immortal existence, and the significance of a water underworld, so the glittering, iridescent mirrors and porcelain on Gullah graves reflect the light which represents the spirit. These objects, like water when struck by sunlight, are intimations of the flash of the separated spirit in symbolized flight. Mirrors, lamps, porcelain, and glass are spirit-embodying once they are placed on the graves.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Their presence keeps the spirit away from the living. The significance of spiritual proximity in brilliance gave rise to the BaKongo custom of lighting bonfires on graves to lead one's soul to another world. Similarly, Gullah torchlight burials may have had a deeper meaning than simply lighting the path. Certainly the presence of lamps on African-American graves indicates that perhaps this was a means of lighting the way to the world beyond, and keeping away the deceased's spirit. Furthermore, the decorations imply the deceased's entrance into the fourth moment, a spiritual existence where all is light and brilliance. Breaking pottery and porcelain was perhaps not done to prevent theft, as some researchers believe, but may indicate the deceased's spiritual release and break with earthly life.[25]

Another interesting continuity between Gullah and African traditions in regard to burial is the position of the deceased. In Central West Africa, the coffin is placed so that the deceased faces eastward. Folklorist Elsie Parsons noted that Gullah graves were "invariably dug east to west, with the head to the west." Thomas Higginson wrote in his diary of a "very impressive" funeral for two black soldiers in his regiment. Just before the coffins were lowered, "an old man whispered to me that I must have their positions altered,—the heads must be towards the west." Higginson complied without asking why. Gullahs and Africans shared a concept of the cosmos. The world followed the sun from east to west.[26]

Sea Island slaves retained a belief in the power of agents of evil and easily included the Christian devil in their hierarchy. Ghosts, hags, plat-eyes, conjurers, and others were all instruments of Satan. At times their faith in God may not have surpassed their fear of the devil.[27] On other occasions God could, for the sake of "the faithful," take the role of a conjurer and bring evil instead of good. Although Gullahs believed that Satan and his cohorts were mainly responsible for evil, they also felt that God was sometimes willing to bring evil down upon an adversary of one of His own. In the following illustration, God reportedly used His power in this way. July Brown was a high officer in one of the churches on Edisto Island. When he was interviewed in the 1930s for the Federal Writers Project, he related the story of how he once prayed a man to death:

> I been on de Savannah train goin' to Charleston. My wallet been jam down deep in my hip pocket. Must ob had 'bout twenty dollars in um. Lo and behold when I git to de Union station, I feel in my pocket to git street cyar money, and my wallet done gone! I notice dat when I come out ob de train uh black, sharp face

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

APPENDIX E

Gullah Folkways

Because they occupied a position of servitude, the Gullahs had to accept outwardly, points of view, customs, and beliefs to which they were exposed by the dominant society. Nevertheless, through sublety and secretiveness they were able to retain some of their previously held beliefs and practices. After slavery, the Gullahs were occasionally willing to share some of their beliefs, customs, and "superstitions" with those readily identifiable as friends, or with those who would not censure the Gullahs for their ways of thinking. Thus a wealth of information about Gullah culture was collected from various sources, but particularly by WPA workers. The following information related to Gullah folk religion and supernatural beliefs provides a mere sample of the material. Unless otherwise stated, this information on Gullah folk beliefs was taken from the WPA files at the South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. Although more research is needed in this area, it was nevertheless possible to trace some of these beliefs to African origins.

Folk Beliefs

Spirits show themselves to babies more often than to grown people. When babies smile or cry out in their sleep, it is because some spirit is amusing or troubling them.

If there is a baby in a house of death, pass the baby over the coffin. This will prevent the spirit from returning to trouble the baby.

People born with a caul or veil over their faces are supposed to have strange powers, to foretell the future, see spirits, etc.[a]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Spirits lift their feet high off the ground when they walk. If they come around your bed when you are sick and stay for some time, it means you are going to get well. The spirits belong to your dead relatives, who have come back to earth to see how you are. If they come and then go away again, it means that they have come for you and you are going to die.

Spirits come back to the earth sometimes in the shape of animals. They do this because they are evil spirits and want to worry humans. It is easy to tell whether a dog or cat that crosses your path is a natural animal or spirit. If it is a natural animal you won't feel anything, but if it is a spirit, the hair will stand up on your head and the goose bumps will rise on your skin.[b,e]

To prevent a dead person's spirit from returning to "Hant you," sprinkle turpentine on the floor behind the body as it is taken out of the house. The turpentine carries the spirit with it.

To keep "hants" (evil spirits) off when there is a death, burn sulphur at the four corners of the house.

If a person who has voodooed another looks in the face of the corpse when he is in his coffin, blood will gush from the mouth of the corpse and everyone present will know who "fixed" him and caused his death.

There are certain persons among the Gullah Negroes who are known as "conjurers," these are very dangerous people and not to be trifled with. A conjurer can "put bad mout" on people or things, give them bad luck and keep them from prospering. A "spell" cast by a conjurer can cause a person to become ill and slowly waste away until he dies.

A conjurer is a very secret thing. Negroes will not discuss it with a white person. It is black magic and to treat it lightly is to invite disaster. They will admit quite readily however, if they have had a particularly bad run of luck, that somebody has "put bad mount" on them.[c]

Negroes of the South Carolina Sea Islands seldom employ the word "witch" in describing an old woman who is versed in the art of witchcraft. Accurately speaking there are no witches among the Negroes—at

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

113
[764]

24. Vlach, *Afro-American Decorative Arts*, 143; Laman, *Kongo*, III: 21, 37; Thompson, *Four Moments of the Sun*, 198.

25. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 139–42, and *Four Moments of the Sun*, 183; Vlach, *Afro-American Decorative Arts*, 141. Laman writes that "the porcelain articles may comprise mugs (with holes knocked in bottom), to prevent their being stolen," *Kongo*, II: 95.

26. Vlach, *Afro-American Decorative Arts*, 147; Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands*, 215; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.).

27. See Appendix E.

28. Folklore Project, #1655, D-4-27, 27A, 27B WPA, SCL.

29. Ibid.

30. See Appendix E.

31. Maxim Gorky, *A Confession*, trans. William Frederick Harvey (London: Everett, 1910).

Epilogue

1. Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Mentor Books, 1977) 421–22, 439–41; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 128–31; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 59–60; Tilden G. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New York: Atheneum, 1970; repr. from 1968 ed.), 261.

2. Anna Carter to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, January 22, 1863, AMA.

3. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Chapter 3.

Appendix D: The Deity

1. Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 116–26.

2. Rosa B. Cooley, *School Acres* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 157–58.

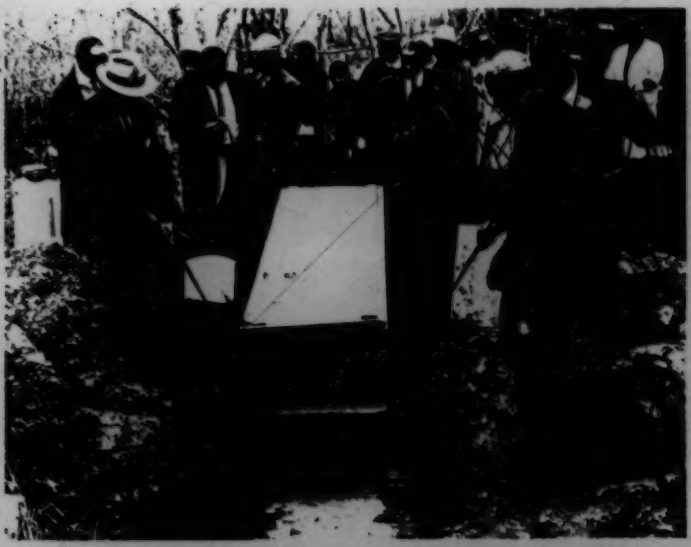
4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

• 764
292

[P 76]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

764
292



764

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Babies are passed over the coffin of ancestors during burial rites.

Children born feet first are gifted and able to manipulate binding constraints.

Children may be named according to season of birth, birth order, and of birth date.[18]

In a more recent research effort Kiser suggests that grandparents assume a major responsibility in the Sea Island family.[19] This investigation suggests that the role of grandparents was primarily due to: (a) the migration of younger parents to urban cities while leaving behind offsprings to the care and rearing traditions of grandparents, (b) the seasonal employment patterns whereby the parent temporarily leaves the Island in search of jobs on the mainland.

Undoubtedly these factors do act as antecedents, however, the extent to which this behavior is affected by cultural tradition has not been entertained. Hence it is uncertain whether the status accorded elder Sea Islanders and their family roles are primarily related to environmental factors or more so to the survival of West African cultural elements. There is reason to suggest that the functioning of eldors in the Sea Island family and

---

[18] Herskovits and F. S. Dahomey, Life in the Haitian Valley (2 vols.; New York: 1937-1938).

[19] Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to Urban Centers (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932).

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

voyage from which they never returned.[23] Ten years ago Katie told me that the Sapelo Negroes never swept dirt out the door at night if they could help it. If they did or were obliged to throw out water, it was important to say, "Move on, fr'en," or " 'Scuse me, brother." Otherwise they were in danger of offending some of their kinfolk who might be passing by or "visitin' aroun'." On St. Simon's I was told if it were necessary to sweep at night you must first throw out a live coal, to make sure you did not sweep away the spirit of some member of the family.

On Sapelo if a hag torments you at night you put a knife, or a Bible, under your pillow. Glasgow says that a man he knows would cry out in his sleep and could get no peace until he tried this remedy.[24] Katie told me that when you had occasion to speak of the dead, you made the sign of the cross on your forehead. At a funeral on St. Simon's an old woman went to the fireplace and, with a sooty finger, made the same sign on the forehead of a little child. The next day, when asked why she did this, she explained that it was to keep the spirit of the dead man from troubling the youngster.[25] Katie also told me that passing the child over the coffin to someone on the other side afforded the same immunity.

I have never been convinced that the reason given by our Negroes for holding funerals at night was unimpeachably true. The answer I usually get, when I question them, reflects on the generosity of the slave owner. It seems unlikely that any master as kindhearted as the one described by Susan Dabney Smedes, in *A Southern Planter*, would begrudge the time it took from the daily "tas' " for the funeral of a beloved slave. Night funerals were apparently an established custom in Virginia in 1835, the time the Dabneys left for Mississippi. Mrs. Smedes tells us that she remembers the death of Grannie Harriett, born in tide-water Virginia long before

[23] M. Andanson is quoted in Astley's Collection as saying that the "Bristol and Liverpool ships were the worst offenders." It is also reported by Miss Kingsley, in West African Travels, that red was a favorite color of the spirits ("spirits always like red") and the most frequent charm-case was of that color "to flatter and please" them.

[24] Miss Beckwith mentions the same inclination to ascribe supernatural powers to objects used in Christian religion: "hence a [Revivalist] preacher always held a Bible, although he might hold it upside down." On the coast of Georgia this custom is the rule, but it is from an unwillingness to admit illiteracy and to depart from a convention. But Miss Beckwith tells of other superstitions that are surprisingly similar to those found on our sea islands. They were in all likelihood carried to Jamaica by the slaves of the loyalists who settled there following the Revolutionary War.

[25] A curious instance of Catholic influence on an African superstition. Lampblack was used to darken coffins in the old days, and a finger rubbed on the coffin was as effective as one dabbed in soot.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

her master, Thomas Dabney, who was born in 1798. Crannie had been given to him by his mother with the words: "You can trust her in everything." When he went to Mississippi she went along with his other slaves, but apparently the journey was too hard, and Grannie died soon after their arrival. "The master himself led the funeral procession, and all his children followed the coffin as mourners. He ordered out the whole plantation, every one who could walk, and every man, woman, and child carried a torch. The sound of the funeral hymn and the blazing of the many torches, as we wound down the road to the dark shades of the burying-ground, made a painful impression on me as a child and caused many a secret tear." In her *Journal* Fanny Kemble describes another night funeral on Butler's Island, to which she reacted in a similar manner—except that she did not shed her tears in private.

In describing an African burial, Mungo Park mentions that the body is dressed in white cotton, wrapped in a mat, and then "carried to the grave in the dusk of the evening, by the relations." From this I am led to believe that the custom may have originated in Africa. Further evidence to support such a view is furnished by Monroe M. Work, who says, in an article in the *Southern Workman* (1907), that it was an old Hamarian practice to bury the dead in the dark. It may be that our Negroes carried out some such traditional observance when they threw their pine torches beside the grave and went back without them. We know the belief in spirits is strong, and it is possible that in this way the spirit of the dead man was prevented from following the living to their homes. Be that as it may, the pine torches were never removed, and the nearest I have come to an explanation of why they were left was given me by Katie Brown: They belonged to the dead. You must not take away a thing that is theirs. If, at the burial, a button falls to the ground from your dress, you must not pick it up. Bad luck follows you if you do.[28]

A nephew of Katie's gave me an instance of what happened to a Sapelo colored man he knows, who helped clean up the graveyard. After he had put the brush in piles to burn, he thriftily changed his mind and brought in his ox and cart to carry it away. Instead, he had to back his "team" into the fence and leave in a hurry when attacked by an immense dog—as big as a yearling calf—that had never before been

[28] *If you start to do something for the dead—whatever it is—you must carry it through. Laura never reached the grave of her son with the flowers she had apparently gathered for it, and in a few months she died in an asylum. The headstone carved out of the marble top of a wash-stand by young Aaron for his father's grave is still in the Cabin. He has been in serious trouble ever since he left it there.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

764 [995] [996] [178] [795]

seen on the island. Later he returned with three men to get his ox. This time the dog did not appear—but the cart went back empty.

In the Sapelo burying ground I have seen many evidences of the African custom of placing useful articles on the tops of graves. The Negroes generally say they are for ornamentation, but on Sapelo I was told that the alarm clocks—of which there were many—are for the purpose of waking the dead at Doomsday. At the Petersville graveyard, lamps and electric-light bulbs are as popular as cups and pitchers.

764 171

Work also tells us in the above-mentioned article that "Among the Zulus, pottery is broken by the widow over the grave," [27] and René Maran, in *Batouala*, speaks of the same custom, specifying that the dead man's pots are placed upon his clothing. With his easy chair on top of everything, he is prepared for living the life of the dead. The pictures that accompany an article on "Fetishism in Congo Land" [28] by E. J. Glave, one of Stanley's pioneer officers, give positive proof of the origin of the custom. One, portraying the grave of a Congo Chieftain, shows the same type of decoration that is in use among our Southern rural Negroes. In addition, the author gives a picture of a distorted "charm root" which explains the use of eccentric wood growths in the decoration of the Negro graveyard at Sunbury. Headstones like the cement work found in the Sunbury yard, are a modern innovation. Mungo Park tells us that he "never observed that any stone was placed over the grave, as a monument or memorial." The noticeable lack of interest displayed by our Negroes in providing any sort of marker for their dead, other than a couple of stakes which soon disappear, may be accounted for in this way.

481 562 178 [764]

The custom observed by the men, in walking apart from the women, to a baptism and to a "buryin'," is apparently based on an African tradition. Maran tells us: "It is not right to walk side by side. A custom as old as the Negro, dictated single file." To this day older members of the race walk single file—the men in front. In the old-time funeral processions the women and children followed the men, or else walked on the opposite side of the road—now they ride in automobiles. In many Negro churches, the men sit on the left side, the women on the right.[29]

[27] *Our Southern Indians made holes in the bottom of the pots they put in graves, so that the spirit of the pot could accompany the spirit of the dead man to the other world.*

[28] Century, April, 1891.

[29] *In the Friends Meeting I attended in my youth, the women sat on the left side of the meeting-house and the men on the right.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

an hour. She was covered with a coat and left where she fell until she returned to consciousness.

In *African Majesty* Egerton speaks of the same hands-off treatment, saying: "When persons not given to such behavior fall down in a fit, they are left where they fall, and no one touches them." It is a very easy matter for a Negro—even in this country—to become possessed. I have seen this phenomenon happen too many times among our Georgia Negroes to believe that the Negro patterned his behavior after that of white fanatics.[34] The chances are that the whites copied the blacks, since it is a matter of record that both races attended the same revivals. It is also possible that the whites took over the African song-form, and the system of punctuating the sermon with responses like the Negroes' "Tell 'im!" "Preach the Word!" "Go on!" and "Amen!" I heard a Negro preacher say to an unresponsive congregation: "You gotta help me. You needn't think you can sit back there an' do nothin'." From then on, he held their attention, and received the emotional support that is required to become a successful evangelist. This form of encouragement evidently came out of Africa, for Captain Canot, in his *Adventures of an African Slaver*, tells us that "It is the custom in African palavers to give token of assent by a sigh, a groan, a slight exclamation, or shout, when anything affecting, agreeable, or touching is uttered by a speaker."

Where the "holy laugh" came from I am unable to say, but it is clearly of a piece with the unusual observances already mentioned. I had read about it, but heard it employed on several occasions before I recognized the mirthless staccato "ha-ha" for what it was. It is unobtrusively introduced to carry on a rhythmical phrase, in much the same way as the enclitical *a* helps to fill any gap which may interfere with the undulating flow of a song.

There is far more of tradition connected with the religious observances of the Negroes than appears on the surface. The custom of sending messages by the dying to those who have gone before, moaning, singing, and "hollerin' " while "settin' up" with the dead, holding elaborate funerals, preaching the funeral sermon when it suits the convenience of the pastor—anywhere from one to three months after the "buryin' "—each one has its counterpart in Africa. Egerton, who stayed in one

[34] Melville J. Herskovits says in his Handbook of Social Psychology: "The religious hysteria that marks the manner of worship by certain white groups in the United States is so different from the kind of evangelical excitation found in Europe that it can be referred only to influences—in some cases, indeed, two or three times removed—which emanated from Negro religious gatherings."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

spot long enough to find out many fascinating things about Africa's black residents, mentions the fact that "In the cold wet months it is inconvenient to have . . . a [funeral] feast, and if some one dies at that time of year, the feast is often postponed until the dry season."

Negro preachers—particularly those who possess good voices and a store of spicy proverbs—often deliver sermons and offer prayers that stick in the mind. One I heard in Liberty County (the one whom I thought afflicted) expatiated on the subject of sin. He made it clear that certain types were worse than others. "Sin is a mean thing," and his tone was scornful; but when he said: "Self is a terrible thing!" it was thunderous and convincing. In a barn of a church in Camden County the substance of the preacher's prayer was in these touchingly earnest words: "We're down here, Lord, chewin' on dry bones an' swallerin' bitter pills. We can't do nothin' without You." Whatever may be said about the emotional character of the religion of our American Negro, it must be conceded that his sins are of the flesh rather than the spirit. He is generous with his last crust, and there would be no need of orphanages if white people, in proportion to their means, adopted as many children as colored people.

When it comes to terse economy of speech we are obliged to concede that no one can equal the Negro. Mrs. Annie Arnold, born on St. Simon's in 1844, gave me the perfect example of this fact in recounting a bit of local history. A cargo of slaves of the Ebo tribe had been landed at a suspiciously secluded spot on the west side of the island. They preferred death to a life of captivity, and as they walked into the water the leader said: "The water brought us here. The water will take us away." No one but an African could have expressed such poignant unhappiness in so few words. In view of the fact known to traders that the Ebo men made poor slaves and were prone to suicide,[25] the account is probably true. The Negroes believe the story, and to this day they have to be extremely hungry to fish by themselves at Ebo Landing. One night a few years ago some colored boys braved tradition, and went 'possum hunting in the neighborhood. I have my own ideas as to the real cause of their terrifying experience, but the fact remains that no others have been tempted to repeat it.

Sir Charles Lyell tells us that "The slave trade ceased in 1796, and but few negroes were smuggled into Georgia from foreign countries, except indirectly for

[25] For this reason as few as possible were accepted by the traders.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

MOONLIGHT—STARLIGHT

In *Slave Songs of the United States*, the origin of a song similar to "Moonlight—Starlight" is attributed to St. Simon's Island by Colonel Trowbridge, who is quoted as saying "that it was sung at funerals in the night time—one of the most solemn and characteristic customs of the Negroes." Fanny Kemble, in her *Journal*, describes a "buryin' " that took place at the Butler Plantation in 1839:

> Yesterday evening the burial of the poor man, Shadrach, took place. I had been applied to for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a winding-sheet for him, and just as the twilight was thickening into darkness I went with Mr. — [Pierce Butler's husband] to the cottage of one of the slaves . . . a cooper of the name of London, who was to perform the burial service. The coffin was laid on trestles in front of the cooper's cottage, and a large assemblage of the people had gathered around, many of the men carrying pine-wood torches, the fitful glare of which glanced over the strange assembly. . . . Presently the whole congregation uplifted their voices in a hymn, the first high wailing notes of which—sung all in unison, in the midst of these unwonted surroundings—sent a thrill through all my nerves. When the chant ceased cooper London began a prayer, and all the people knelt down in the sand, as I did also. . . . When the prayer was concluded we all rose, and, the coffin being taken up, proceeded to the people's burial-ground, when London read aloud portions of the funeral service from the Prayer-book. . . . The service ended with a short address from London upon the subject of Lazarus, and the confirmation which the story of his resurrection afforded our hopes. . . . When the coffin was lowered the grave was found to be partially filled with water—naturally enough, for the whole island is a mere swamp, off which the Altamaha is only kept from sweeping by the high dikes all around it. This seemed to shock and distress the people, and for the first time during the whole ceremony there were sounds of crying and exclamations of grief heard among them . . . and so we returned from one of the most striking religious ceremonies at which I ever assisted.

When Margaret, one of my star shouters, was buried a few years ago at Kelvin Grove, in the old slave yard on the marsh, I too was shocked to see the coffin lowered into the water, but in this instance such an occurrence was taken as a matter of course.

Of all the primitive songs this is the most plaintive as well as the most impressive.

Moonlight—Starlight
O-o-h [1] Moonlight
Believer what's the matter?
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)
John lay the body to the tomb
O-o-h—let me go!
John lay the body to the tomb
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)

[1] Sung with the lips closed. The accompanying piano arrangement is by Creighton Churchill.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

74
S32

[illegible]. A Combination of African Ideas and American Burial Conventions

[Facing p. 112]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

"SETTIN'-UP"

764 [178] The custom of "settin'-up" with the dead still prevails among the Negroes, who even go so far as to ask for such a privilege on the death of a white employer to whom they are devoted. Mrs. Shadman told me that when her grandmother, Margaret Cater, died at Kelvin Grove, her family's ex-slaves came all day "to see the face." At dusk they appeared again and sat up with "Ole Miss" through the night, singing, moaning, and praying until sun-up. When Mrs. Shadman died this year, two young colored men whom she had befriended since childhood continued the custom and sat up with the body.

764 152 In some districts a "settin'-up," or "wake," as such a ceremony is now called, is more emotional than in others, and certain families are known to be extremely excitable on such occasions. A man who works for me now and then said he did not like to go to a "settin'-up" because "they holler so much." [15] A wake held at the home of the deceased is likely to be a quieter affair than one held in a church, where the mourners are apt to display a frenzy of grief. When the body is taken from the church, the "hollerin' " begins in earnest. I have always wondered if the stimulation of an audience had anything to do with the difference.

764 [272] [264] At a private "settin'-up" a big fire of logs in front of the cabin lasts through the night, and rude benches, made of boards laid on sections of a tree trunk, are placed around it. Quantities of coffee in a pot beside the fire, and a large carton of soda crackers help revive the tired mourners and keep them awake.

763 The Negroes often have a premonition of death. On St. Simon's, Deacon Henry Armstrong, who had been ailing for some months, realized his time was short, and sent for his family and friends. When they arrived he was eating his supper of fish, grits, and coffee. Later, when he stood up, moved about, and began preaching his own funeral sermon, as was sometimes done, his hearers wondered if he was "touched in the head." He called upon one deacon to sing "Old-Time Religion" and then upon another for a prayer. When a member of the group came forward to pray, Henry told him not to proceed, that he was not worthy. A "sister" came to shake his hand and say good-bye; he told her she must go to her father and mother, and beg their pardon for the wrong she had done them. She did as

[171] [15] Such behavior is in line with established African tradition. In Astley's Collection of Voyages and Travels it is stated that "the cry . . . is sometimes a fortnight or month after the decease. . . . They begin with crying and at night they go to singing and dancing, and so continue till they break-up."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

she was told and Henry said: "Now that is over." That night he died in his sleep.

However, not all premonitions materialize. I was told of an instance on Edisto Island, where a young girl was stricken and believed her last hour had come. Relations were summoned, and the usual rites were conducted. At the last moment, however, when she was expected to make a proper exit, she was overcome with a desire to eat. She clamored for food, and the watchers went home in disgust.

In the old days it was the custom to send messages by the dying to those who had gone before.[16] A friend told me how an ex-slave came to her house just before her father's funeral, and said he wanted to talk to "Marse Jim." She explained to the old man that her father had just died. He said: "I know it. I want to talk to him." Of course he was given permission. How one wishes the conversation could have been overheard!

On the out islands of the Bahamas, the custom of "settin'-up" with the dying is an event enjoyed by the one who is bound for the other world quite as much as by those who come for a last visit. The procedure is practically the same as on the mainland, as is to be expected, since the custom was carried from the States at the end of the Revolution by slaves of the loyalists from South Carolina and Georgia. An acquaintance who spent a winter on one of the Berry Islands gave an account of a "settin'-up" with which she was concerned. A neighboring colored woman, who was very old, decided it was time for her to die, and begged for a certain white dress in which to lie in state. She set the date of her death, and invited her friends from the adjoining islands to be with her on the momentous occasion. She looked very handsome, I was told, and all went well—but twenty-four hours passed, and she did not die. Another day went by, and she still clung to life. When nothing happened on the third day, the guests were obliged to return to their respective homes. In a couple of weeks, however, she sent for them again. This time luck was with her, and she departed according to schedule.

IN THAT OLD FIELD

Susyanna (Illustration 29)[A] learned this lonesome melody from her grandmother, who was a slave. Sung in a minor key, it is one to which the printed word and note can never do justice. It must be heard to be appreciated. "That old field" is the Negro name for a burying ground, and the slave, like his cousins in Africa, was quite as much concerned with the life to come as with that of the moment.

[16] *As exemplified in the song:* "Ride on, Conquering King," p. 183.

A, [For Illustration 29, see Category 142, plate facing p. 177--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

FOR I AIN' GOIN' T' DIE NO MO'

533 The rhythm and tune of this "settin'-up" song suggest an old English ballad.
764 As can be seen, there is nothing religious about the ironic observation in the
(574) first two lines. Julia, who taught me the song, laughingly said: "It's true all right. Mighty few visit the sick, but hundreds go to the wake and the buryin'."

(539)

When I'm on my sick bed—nobody visit me
But now I'm goin' to the graveyard—everybody follow me.
My sister won't y'u low my pillow
Low—low—O-h low
My sister won't y'u low my pillow
Low—for I ain' goin' t' die no mo'.
Somebody goin' to low my pillow
Low—low—O-h low
Somebody goin' to low my pillow
Low—for I ain' goin' t' die no mo'.

159 Janey Jackson, (Illustration 33)[A] one of the most picturesque characters of
567 Brunswick sang an additional verse of the same song. Janey was born on St. Simon's, in "Nigger House Field" at Kelvin Grove, in 1826. At the age of twelve she was sold by the Caters, with her parents,[21] two sisters and a brother, to Mr. Henry duBignon of Jekyl Island. She told me her family came over to St. Simon's frequently to see friends and relatives, as it was only a short row at low tide before the channel was deepened. Janey described the Caters' Old Dembo, Neptun' Small, father of Clarence and Cornelia, and Adam Proctor, father of Julia and Willis. No doubt it was on St. Simon's that she learned this verse:

(533)
(539)

When I bin in de worl' bin a sin—nobody had nothin' to say
But now I come into de House of God—everybody got somethin' to say.
Carry me an' bring me—in dat returnal day
Carry me an' bring me—in dat returnal day.

Under the influence of the duBignons, from whom she also learned to speak French, Janey became a Catholic; and when she went to live in Brunswick, she

[21] Janey's father, Jack, was an African prince, but her mother was "country born" (born in America).

A. [For Illustration 33, see Category 142, plate facing p. 225--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

159 always attended early mass. She never married; her sweetheart, Ishmael, belonged
567 to another family, and his owners, thinking he would not be worth much to them in the field if his wife were on another plantation, encouraged a match with one of their own slaves.

159 To the end of her life, she smoked a pipe, and cooked her food in a black pot over a fire in the yard exactly as she had done in her youth. She must have been very strong, as she rowed a boat, did her half-acre of cotton, and, in her own words, "never knew what it was to be tired." She was a hundred and nine years old when she died in 1936, and evidently came of an exceptionally long-lived family, for her father was a centenarian, her sister lived to be a hundred and eight, and a cousin, also born in 1826, outlived her. Janey was straight and healthy to the last, and the sphinx-like, unwrinkled face in her coffin was like a piece of smooth black ebony. I had not realized in life how handsome she was or how Egyptian were her features. The inexpressible dignity of that dark mask so impressed me that I went back three times to make sure I would not forget it.

"BURYIN'"

764 Old residents of St. Simon's tell me that before the days of automobiles, when
533 even horses [22] and wagons were luxuries, a Negro "buryin'" was an impressive affair. The mourners sang as they walked from the church, where the service was held, to the graveyard a mile away. The singers could be heard the minute they left the church, for at that time "they opened their mouths. They weren't like the young people today—too proud to sing." [23]

764 The home-made coffin, lined with "paper cambric" and covered with black
492 calico or darkened with lampblack, was placed in the "rough box" and carried on
493 a one-horse wagon. Only the preacher rode with the driver. The men walked single
562 file on one side of the road and the women on the other.

481 When the minister could not come to the island for the church service, it was
793 not held until his next visit—possibly in three weeks, sometimes in three months. In the days when "Reverend" Andrew Neal officiated, if he was urgently needed to

231 [22] After the War Between the States only a vicious stallion, belonging to the Coupers, was
736 left on St. Simon's. It was necessary to hobble him before he could be used. There were plenty of ponies, called "tackies," living on the salt marshes; but Joe tells me they were wild, like deer, and it never paid to buy one.

[23] It was said of Adam and Neptun' Small and MacWilliams that they could be heard a mile —than which, according to slave standards, there was no higher praise.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

"preach the funeral," [24] the St. Simon's Negroes would row all the way to Savannah —over eighty miles—to get him. They landed at Frederica, where the First African Baptist Church was located.

At Aaron's funeral Laura gave the time-honored dramatic touch by growing hysterical, throwing up her arms, and screaming: "Good-bye Aaron—y'u gone forever." While the clods were shoveled upon the coffin, singing providentially kept us from hearing the sound. Different men, headed by the undertaker, took turns filling in the grave. The way they joked and laughed as they worked rather shocked me. I understand, however, that Africans show the same levity after distressing occasions.

M. H. Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa*, mentions the intense love of the African for funerals, and, according to the descriptions given by other explorers, there is a striking similarity in the burial customs of the natives and their rural American cousins. In Africa it is believed that the position of the ghost in the other world requires that the funeral be as expensive as the family can possibly provide. Furthermore, without a fitting ceremony the departed spirit cannot reach its final destination, but lingers among the living, making conditions very uncomfortable for them. The Negroes of our Southern states show the same feeling about funerals. They spare no expense in making them elaborate affairs. One that took place on St. Simon's years ago will long be remembered: "Why, Mrs. Parris', it cost four hundred dollars. They sent to Savannah for flowers, and she was buried in new white slippers that cost six dollars . . . !" I notice that the American Negro, no matter what the work or business in hand, puts it aside for such an event. To pay the cost of a funeral that will be a credit to the corpse as well as his family, the survivors will mortgage what property they may have, if they have not been so provident as to take out an insurance policy, join a "Bury League," or pay to some society or lodge dues which range from ten to twenty-five cents a week.

[24] When Quarterman's son-in-law died, his daughter said to me: "Tell the old man my husband died three weeks ago and the funeral will be preached next Sunday." Then she asked me if I would please give her a black hat. A Northern friend frequently sent me boxes of summer hats in the autumn. If the original owners could have seen them in winter on the dusky wearers, they would have been surprised. The fun of fitting out the singers with becoming hats has always made me wonder if I hadn't missed my calling.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

757 brown pea liquor as a wash for smallpox, a mixture of lard and mocking-bird bush (cassena) as an ointment for smallpox, soot for cuts, and lemon juice and ashes for colds.

757 One woman reproved a member of the research staff
755 because he threw away two rats which had been killed in
[825] a trap. She said that the rats were just the thing she needed for a tea which she wanted to brew for her ten-year-old son to cure him of bed-wetting. The same
[826] woman believed that her failure to "bind" the boy—that is, to wrap cloth tightly around his abdomen—while he was a baby had resulted in his being weak physically. An-
[827] other woman believed that if a stammering child drank water from a bell he would be cured.

854 Many mothers with babes in arms will call the baby's
774 spirit when they start home after a visit, believing that the spirit might stay behind and evil consequences ensue un-
[777] less it is called. It is considered bad luck to let a baby
[764] be near the coffin at a funeral. If one is present he is passed
[789] over the coffin from one person to another in order to prevent his spirit from accompanying the dead. Mr.
854 Wildy, teacher of blacksmithing at Penn School and a
764 member of the quartet, said that on one occasion his in-
789 fant was taken to a funeral. He had thought nothing of the superstition, but other people at the funeral became very much disturbed on seeing the baby and would give him no peace until he had passed the child across the coffin.

764 As elsewhere in the South, the St. Helena people put
[171] on the grave the things last used by a person. These are usually china, glasses, pitchers, medicine bottles, and other inexpensive things, but sometimes articles of value are left on the graves—antique clocks, vases, and the like.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

Some families still cover up all mirrors and stop the clocks in the house for a time after a death. Mrs. King related that an old woman showed her some spots on a mirror, saying that the spots were eyes of spirits which came back because the mirror was not covered. The water used to bathe the dead person must be disposed of carefully, for to step over the place where it is poured will cause boils and sores on the legs.

A list of all the other beliefs surviving in the Negro culture of St. Helena Island would fill a small volume. Since there is little in them which differs from Southern Negro folk beliefs in general, it is not worth while to include them here. Mrs. Parsons' work may be consulted for further St. Helena beliefs, and Puckett's *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* may be consulted for a detailed discussion of the whole field of Negro superstition.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

the village was moved about three-fourths of a mile away to the pine woods and the houses built farther apart.

Smallpox and yellow fever also caused the planters considerable alarm, although there were more widespread efforts to prevent these infectious diseases than others to which the Negroes were subject. The state quarantine laws greatly reduced the number of cases of yellow fever and the planter's general use of vaccine lessened the epidemics of smallpox. Henry A. Middleton, Jr.'s, Weehaw Plantation Book indicates that he regularly had the black children vaccinated.

Although sea-island planters usually considered that the winter months were the hardest for the Negroes and the summer months for the whites, the Negroes also suffered from malaria, although not to the same extent as the whites. In 1857 James Hamilton Couper wrote to his son James that the illness of another son was "induced by the same state of the atmosphere which has caused a very general malaria of typhoid fever among the Negroes." For four weeks during this attack there was an average of forty ill in the plantation hospital.[58]

The death of a trusted slave often brought a deal of sorrow into the planter's family. In recounting the deaths on the plantation in a letter to his son, Couper wrote in 1857:

> To myself personally the most painful loss has been that of poor old Sandy and his wife Joan. . . . I requested Mr. Brown to read the funeral service at his grave; and your mother, myself and the family attended. He was an honest, faithful and good man; and I part with him as with a devoted and tried friend. He was

[58] Couper-Wylly Papers, April 13, 1857.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

among my earliest playmates, and during my whole life his attachment never varied. I shall gratify myself by placing a stone on his grave.[57]

INFANT WELFARE

The children's diseases were sometimes more disastrous than cholera or dysentery, despite the general precautions observed in caring for the plantation children. Planters usually insisted that the young be given special attention, and they also urged mothers to take proper care of themselves during pregnancy. Henry A. Middleton, Jr., would not permit any woman to work on his island lands in midwinter, and he immediately put *enceinte* women on half task until confinement. Every planter who had a hospital for his people insisted that the mothers come there for confinement, for there they could be better cared for and kept more quiet, but the women invariably preferred their own houses where they could gossip with their friends without restraint, and they usually managed, as Couper told Sir Charles Lyell, to be taken by surprise at home. Mothers were allowed a month of rest after confinement, an advantage rarely enjoyed by hard-working English peasants, and were not put at full tasks until the child was eight months old.

Doctors were seldom called at the confinement of a Negro woman,[58] for the woman's mistress herself seldom received such attention. In every group of plantation slaves there were one or more midwives listed on the plantation record as the "granny," or nurse, but known

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] MS in Hawks Letters, Library of Congress. Dr. J. M. Hawks to Esther Hawks, May 17, 1862, from Edisto Island: "In midwifery here, Drs. are not called, several births have occurred since I have been here all attended by the Negro women on the place."